

INTERNATIONAL LITERATURE MAY 2016

Public domain stories and poems in English from Rabindranath Tagore, Sir Arthur Conan Doyle, Amy Lowell, Guy Wetmore Caryll, Edgar Allan Poe, and others. Also a Spanish translation of Poe by Ruben Dario, and works by Arthur Rimbaud and Charles Baudelaire in French, the latter also translated into English. Four cantos by a Portugese poet. A Korean folk tale. A short story in Spanish by Horacio Quiroga. All culled from Project Gutenberg by Matt Pierard.



Boating by Edouard Manet

THE DEVOTEE

by Rabindranath Tagore

from The Hungry Stones And Other Stories

At a time, when my unpopularity with a part of my readers had reached the nadir of its glory, and my name had become the central orb of the journals, to be attended through space with a perpetual rotation of revilement, I felt the necessity to retire to some quiet place and endeavour to forget my own existence.

I have a house in the country some miles away from Calcutta, where I can remain unknown and unmolested. The villagers there have not, as yet, come to any conclusion about me. They know I am no mere holiday-maker or pleasure-seeker; for I never outrage the silence of the village nights with the riotous noises of the city. Nor do they regard me as ascetic, because the little acquaintance they have of me carries the savour of comfort about it. I am not, to them, a traveller; for, though I am a vagabond by nature, my wandering through the village fields is aimless. They are hardly even quite certain whether I am married or single; for they have never seen me with my children. So, not being able to classify me in any animal or vegetable kingdom that they know, they have long since given me up and left me stolidly alone.

But quite lately I have come to know that there is one person in the village who is deeply interested in me. Our acquaintance began on a sultry afternoon in July. There had been rain all the morning, and the air was still wet and heavy with mist, like eyelids when weeping is over.

I sat lazily watching a dappled cow grazing on the high bank of the river. The afternoon sun was playing on her glossy hide. The simple beauty of this dress of light made me wonder idly at man's deliberate waste of money in setting up tailors' shops to deprive his own skin of its natural clothing.

While I was thus watching and lazily musing, a woman of middle age came and prostrated herself before me, touching the ground with her forehead. She carried in her robe some bunches of flowers, one of which she offered to me with folded hands. She said to me, as she offered it: "This is an offering to my God."

She went away. I was so taken aback as she uttered these words, that I could hardly catch a glimpse of her before she was gone. The whole incident was entirely simple, but it left a deep impression on my mind; and as I turned back once more to look at the cattle in the field, the zest of life in the cow, who was munching the lush grass with deep breaths, while she whisked off the flies, appeared to me fraught with mystery. My readers may laugh at my foolishness, but my heart was full

of adoration. I offered my worship to the pure joy of living, which is God's own life. Then, plucking a tender shoot from the mango tree, I fed the cow with it from my own hand, and as I did this I had the satisfaction of having pleased my God.

The next year when I returned to the village it was February. The cold season still lingered on. The morning sun came into my room, and I was grateful for its warmth. I was writing, when the servant came to tell me that a devotee, of the Vishnu cult, wanted to see me. I told him, in an absent way, to bring her upstairs, and went on with my writing. The Devotee came in, and bowed to me, touching my feet. I found that she was the same woman whom I had met, for a brief moment, a year ago.

I was able now to examine her more closely. She was past that age when one asks the question whether a woman is beautiful or not. Her stature was above the ordinary height, and she was strongly built; but her body was slightly bent owing to her constant attitude of veneration. Her manner had nothing shrinking about it. The most remarkable of her features were her two eyes. They seemed to have a penetrating power which could make distance near.

With those two large eyes of hers, she seemed to push me as she entered.

"What is this?" she asked. "Why have you brought me here before your throne, my God? I used to see you among the trees; and that was much better. That was the true place to meet you."

She must have seen me walking in the garden without my seeing her. For the last few days, however, I had suffered from a cold, and had been prevented from going out. I had, perforce, to stay indoors and pay my homage to the evening sky from my terrace. After a silent pause the Devotee said to me: "O my God, give me some words of good."

I was quite unprepared for this abrupt request, and answered her on the spur of the moment: "Good words I neither give nor receive. I simply open my eyes and keep silence, and then I can at once both hear and see, even when no sound is uttered. Now, while I am looking at you, it is as good as listening to your voice."

The Devotee became quite excited as I spoke, and exclaimed: "God speaks to me, not only with His mouth, but with His whole body."

I said to her: "When I am silent I can listen with my whole body. I have come away from Calcutta here to listen to that sound."

The Devotee said: "Yes, I know that, and therefore I have come here to sit by you."

Before taking her leave, she again bowed to me, and touched my feet.

I could see that she was distressed, because my feet were covered. She wished them to be bare.

Early next morning I came out, and sat on my terrace on the roof. Beyond the line of trees southward I could see the open country chill and desolate. I could watch the sun rising over the sugar-cane in the East, beyond the clump of trees at the side of the village. Out of the deep shadow of those dark trees the village road suddenly appeared. It stretched forward, winding its way to some distant villages on the horizon, till it was lost in the grey of the mist.

That morning it was difficult to say whether the sun had risen or not. A white fog was still clinging to the tops of the trees. I saw the Devotee walking through the blurred dawn, like a mist-wraith of the morning twilight. She was singing her chant to God, and sounding her cymbals.

The thick haze lifted at last; and the sun, like the kindly grandsire of the village, took his seat amid all the work that was going on in home and field.

When I had just settled down at my writing-table, to appease the hungry appetite of my editor in Calcutta, there came a sound of footsteps on the stair, and the Devotee, humming a tune to herself, entered, and bowed before me. I lifted my head from my papers.

She said to me: "My God, yesterday I took as sacred food what was left over from your meal."

I was startled, and asked her how she could do that.

"Oh," she said, "I waited at your door in the evening, while you were at dinner, and took some food from your plate when it was carried out."

This was a surprise to me, for every one in the village knew that I had been to Europe, and had eaten with Europeans. I was a vegetarian, no doubt, but the sanctity of my cook would not bear investigation, and the orthodox regarded my food as polluted.

The Devotee, noticing my sign of surprise, said: "My God, why should I come to you at all, if I could not take your food?"

I asked her what her own caste people would say. She told me she had already spread the news far and wide all over the village. The caste people had shaken their heads, but agreed that she must go her own way.

I found out that the Devotee came from a good family in the country, and that her mother was well to-do, and desired to keep her daughter. But she preferred to be a mendicant. I asked her how she made her living. She told me that her followers had given her a piece of land, and that

she begged her food from door to door. She said to me: "The food which I get by begging is divine."

After I had thought over what she said, I understood her meaning. When we get our food precariously as alms, we remember God the giver. But when we receive our food regularly at home, as a matter of course, we are apt to regard it as ours by right.

I had a great desire to ask her about her husband. But as she never mentioned him even indirectly, I did not question her.

I found out very soon that the Devotee had no respect at all for that part of the village where the people of the higher castes lived.

"They never give," she said, "a single farthing to God's service; and yet they have the largest share of God's glebe. But the poor worship and starve."

I asked her why she did not go and live among these godless people, and help them towards a better life. "That," I said with some unction, "would be the highest form of divine worship."

I had heard sermons of this kind from time to time, and I am rather fond of copying them myself for the public benefit, when the chance comes.

But the Devotee was not at all impressed. She raised her big round eyes, and looked straight into mine, and said:

"You mean to say that because God is with the sinners, therefore when you do them any service you do it to God? Is that so?"

"Yes," I replied, "that is my meaning."

"Of course," she answered almost impatiently, "of course, God is with them: otherwise, how could they go on living at all? But what is that to me? My God is not there. My God cannot be worshipped among them; because I do not find Him there. I seek Him where I can find Him."

As she spoke, she made obeisance to me. What she meant to say was really this. A mere doctrine of God's omnipresence does not help us. That God is all-pervading,--this truth may be a mere intangible abstraction, and therefore unreal to ourselves. Where I can see Him, there is His reality in my soul.

I need not explain that all the while she showered her devotion on me she did it to me not as an individual. I was simply a vehicle of her divine worship. It was not for me either to receive it or to refuse it: for it was not mine, but God's.

When the Devotee came again, she found me once more engaged with my books and papers.

"What have you been doing," she said, with evident vexation, "that my God should make you undertake such drudgery? Whenever I come, I find you reading and writing."

"God keeps his useless people busy," I answered; "otherwise they would be bound to get into mischief. They have to do all the least necessary things in life. It keeps them out of trouble."

The Devotee told me that she could not bear the encumbrances, with which, day by day, I was surrounded. If she wanted to see me, she was not allowed by the servants to come straight upstairs. If she wanted to touch my feet in worship, there were my socks always in the way. And when she wanted to have a simple talk with me, she found my mind lost in a wilderness of letters.

This time, before she left me, she folded her hands, and said: "My God! I felt your feet in my breast this morning. Oh, how cool! And they were bare, not covered. I held them upon my head for a long time in worship. That filled my very being. Then, after that, pray what was the use of my coming to you yourself? Why did I come? My Lord, tell me truly,--wasn't it a mere infatuation?"

There were some flowers in my vase on the table. While she was there, the gardener brought some new flowers to put in their place. The Devotee saw him changing them.

"Is that all?" she exclaimed. "Have you done with the flowers? Then give them to me."

She held the flowers tenderly in the cup of her hands, and began to gaze at them with bent head. After a few moments' silence she raised her head again, and said to me: "You never look at these flowers; therefore they become stale to you. If you would only look into them, then your reading and writing would go to the winds."

She tied the flowers together in the end of her robe, and placed them, in an attitude of worship, on the top of her head, saying reverently: "Let me carry my God with me."

While she did this, I felt that flowers in our rooms do not receive their due meed of loving care at our hands. When we stick them in vases, they are more like a row of naughty schoolboys standing on a form to be punished.

The Devotee came again the same evening, and sat by my feet on the

terrace of the roof.

"I gave away those flowers," she said, "as I went from house to house this morning, singing God's name. Beni, the head man of our village, laughed at me for my devotion, and said: 'Why do you waste all this devotion on Him? Don't you know He is reviled up and down the countryside?' Is that true, my God? Is it true that they are hard upon you?"

For a moment I shrank into myself. It was a shock to find that the stains of printers' ink could reach so far.

The Devotee went on: "Beni imagined that he could blow out the flame of my devotion at one breath! But this is no mere tiny flame: it is a burning fire. Why do they abuse you, my God?"

I said: "Because I deserved it. I suppose in my greed I was loitering about to steal people's hearts in secret."

The Devotee said: "Now you see for yourself how little their hearts are worth. They are full of poison, and this will cure you of your greed."

"When a man," I answered, "has greed in his heart, he is always on the verge of being beaten. The greed itself supplies his enemies with poison."

"Our merciful God," she replied, "beats us with His own hand, and drives away all the poison. He who endures God's beating to the end is saved."

II.

That evening the Devotee told me the story of her life. The stars of evening rose and set behind the trees, as she went on to the end of her tale.

"My husband is very simple. Some people think that he is a simpleton; but I know that those who understand simply, understand truly. In business and household management he was able to hold his own. Because his needs were small, and his wants few, he could manage carefully on what we had. He would never meddle in other matters, nor try to understand them.

"Both my husband's parents died before we had been married long, and we were left alone. But my husband always needed some one to be over him. I am ashamed to confess that he had a sort of reverence for me, and looked upon me as his superior. But I am sure that he could understand things better than I, though I had greater powers of talking.

"Of all the people in the world he held his Guru Thakur (spiritual

master) in the highest veneration. Indeed it was not veneration merely but love; and such love as his is rare.

"Guru Thakur was younger than my husband. Oh! how beautiful he was!

"My husband had played games with him when he was a boy; and from that time forward he had dedicated his heart and soul to this friend of his early days. Thakur knew how simple my husband was, and used to tease him mercilessly.

"He and his comrades would play jokes upon him for their own amusement; but he would bear them all with long suffering.

"When I married into this family, Guru Thakur was studying at Benares. My husband used to pay all his expenses. I was eighteen years old when he returned home to our village.

"At the age of fifteen I had my child. I was so young I did not know how to take care of him. I was fond of gossip, and liked to be with my village friends for hours together. I used to get quite cross with my boy when I was compelled to stay at home and nurse him. Alas! my child-God came into my life, but His playthings were not ready for Him. He came to the mother's heart, but the mother's heart lagged behind. He left me in anger; and ever since I have been searching for Him up and down the world.

"The boy was the joy of his father's life. My careless neglect used to pain my husband. But his was a mute soul. He has never been able to give expression to his pain.

"The wonderful thing was this, that in spite of my neglect the child used to love me more than any one else. He seemed to have the dread that I would one day go away and leave him. So even when I was with him, he would watch me with a restless look in his eyes. He had me very little to himself, and therefore his desire to be with me was always painfully eager. When I went each day to the river, he used to fret and stretch out his little arms to be taken with me. But the bathing ghal was my place for meeting my friends, and I did not care to burden myself with the child.

"It was an early morning in August. Fold after fold of grey clouds had wrapped the mid-day round with a wet clinging robe. I asked the maid to take care of the boy, while I went down to the river. The child cried after me as I went away.

"There was no one there at the bathing ghat when I arrived. As a swimmer, I was the best among all the village women. The river was quite full with the rains. I swam out into the middle of the stream some distance from the shore.

"Then I heard a cry from the bank, 'Mother!' I turned my head and saw my boy coming down the steps, calling me as he came. I shouted to him to stop, but he went on, laughing and calling. My feet and hands became cramped with fear. I shut my eyes, afraid to see. When I opened them, there, at the slippery stairs, my boy's ripple of laughter had disappeared for ever.

"I got back to the shore. I raised him from the water. I took him in my arms, my boy, my darling, who had begged so often in vain for me to take him. I took him now, but he no more looked in my eyes and called 'Mother.'

"My child-God had come. I had ever neglected Him. I had ever made Him cry. And now all that neglect began to beat against my own heart, blow upon blow, blow upon blow. When my boy was with me, I had left him alone. I had refused to take him with me. And now, when he is dead, his memory clings to me and never leaves me.

"God alone knows all that my husband suffered. If he had only punished me for my sin, it would have been better for us both. But he knew only how to endure in silence, not how to speak.

"When I was almost mad with grief, Guru Thakur came back. In earlier days, the relation between him and my husband had been that of boyish friendship. Now, my husband's reverence for his sanctity and learning was unbounded. He could hardly speak in his presence, his awe of him was so great.

"My husband asked his Guru to try to give me some consolation. Guru Thakur began to read and explain to me the scriptures. But I do not think they had much effect on my mind. All their value for me lay in the voice that uttered them. God makes the draught of divine life deepest in the heart for man to drink, through the human voice. He has no better vessel in His hand than that; and He Himself drinks His divine draught out of the same vessel.

"My husband's love and veneration for his Guru filled our house, as incense fills a temple shrine. I showed that veneration, and had peace. I saw my God in the form of that Guru. He used to come to take his meal at our house every morning. The first thought that would come to my mind on waking from sleep was that of his food as a sacred gift from God. When I prepared the things for his meal, my fingers would sing for joy.

"When my husband saw my devotion to his Guru, his respect for me greatly increased. He noticed his Guru's eager desire to explain the scriptures to me. He used to think that he could never expect to earn any regard from his Guru himself, on account of his stupidity; but his wife had made up for it.

"Thus another five years went by happily, and my whole life would have passed like that; but beneath the surface some stealing was going on somewhere in secret. I could not detect it; but it was detected by the God of my heart. Then came a day when, in a moment our whole life was turned upside down.

"It was a morning in midsummer. I was returning home from bathing, my clothes all wet, down a shady lane. At the bend of the road, under the mango tree, I met my Guru Thakur. He had his towel on his shoulder and was repeating some Sanskrit verses as he was going to take his bath. With my wet clothes clinging all about me I was ashamed to meet him. I tried to pass by quickly, and avoid being seen. He called me by my name.

"I stopped, lowering my eyes, shrinking into myself. He fixed his gaze upon me, and said: 'How beautiful is your body!'

"All the universe of birds seemed to break into song in the branches overhead. All the bushes in the lane seemed ablaze with flowers. It was as though the earth and sky and everything had become a riot of intoxicating joy.

"I cannot tell how I got home. I only remember that I rushed into the room where we worship God. But the room seemed empty. Only before my eyes those same gold spangles of light were dancing which had quivered in front of me in that shady lane on my way back from the river.

"Guru Thakur came to take his food that day, and asked my husband where I had gone. He searched for me, but could not find me anywhere.

"Ah! I have not the same earth now any longer. The same sunlight is not mine. I called on my God in my dismay, and He kept His face turned away from me.

"The day passed, I know not how. That night I had to meet my husband. But the night is dark and silent. It is the time when my husband's mind comes out shining, like stars at twilight. I had heard him speak things in the dark, and I had been surprised to find how deeply he understood.

"Sometimes I am late in the evening in going to rest on account of household work. My husband waits for me, seated on the floor, without going to bed. Our talk at such times had often begun with something about our Guru.

"That night, when it was past midnight, I came to my room, and found my husband sleeping on the floor. Without disturbing him I lay down on the ground at his feet, my head towards him. Once he stretched his feet, while sleeping, and struck me on the breast. That was his last bequest.

"Next morning, when my husband woke up from his sleep, I was already sitting by him. Outside the window, over the thick foliage of the jack-fruit tree, appeared the first pale red of the dawn at the fringe of the night. It was so early that the crows had not yet begun to call.

"I bowed, and touched my husband's feet with my forehead. He sat up, starting as if waking from a dream, and looked at my face in amazement. I said:

"I have made up my mind. I must leave the world. I cannot belong to you any longer. I must leave your home.'

"Perhaps my husband thought that he was still dreaming. He said not a word.

"Ah! do hear me!' I pleaded with infinite pain. 'Do hear me and understand! You must marry another wife. I must take my leave.'

"My husband said: 'What is all this wild, mad talk? Who advises you to leave the world?'

"I said: 'My Guru Thakur.'

"My husband looked bewildered. 'Guru Thakur!' he cried. 'When did he give you this advice?'

"In the morning,' I answered, 'yesterday, when I met him on my way back from the river.'

"His voice trembled a little. He turned, and looked in my face, and asked me: 'Why did he give you such a behest?'

"I do not know,' I answered. 'Ask him! He will tell you himself, if he can.'

"My husband said: 'It is possible to leave the world, even when continuing to live in it. You need not leave my home. I will speak to my Guru about it.'

"Your Guru,' I said, 'may accept your petition; but my heart will never give its consent. I must leave your home. From henceforth, the world is no more to me.'

"My husband remained silent, and we sat there on the floor in the dark. When it was light, he said to me: 'Let us both come to him.'

"I folded my hands and said: 'I shall never meet him again.'

"He looked into my face. I lowered my eyes. He said no more. I knew

that, somehow, he had seen into my mind, and understood what was there. In this world of mine, there were only two who loved me best--my boy and my husband. That love was my God, and therefore it could brook no falsehood. One of these two left me, and I left the other. Now I must have truth, and truth alone."

She touched the ground at my feet, rose and bowed to me, and departed.

Ooooooooooooooooooooooooooooooooooooo

Canções, I-IV
by António Botto

+I+

A noite
Suavemente descia;
E eu nos teus braços deitado
Até sonhei que morria.

E via
Goivos e cravos aos mólhos;
Um Christo crucificado;
Nos teus olhos,
Suavidade e frieza;
Damasco rôxo, cinzento,
Rendas, velludos puídos,
Perfumes caros entornados,
Rumôr de vento em surdina,
Insenso, rézas, brocados;
Penumbra, sinos dobrando;
Vellas ardendo;
Guitarras, soluços, pragas,
E eu... devagar morrendo.

O teu rosto moreninho,
Eu achei-o mais formoso,
Mas, sem lagrimas, enxuto;
E o teu corpo delgado,
O teu corpo gracioso,
Estava todo coberto de lucto.

Depois, anciosamente,
Procurei a tua boca,
A tua boca sadia;
Beijámo-nos doidamente...
--Era dia!

E os nossos corpos unidos,
Como corpos sem sentidos,
No chão rolaram... e assim ficaram!...

+II+

Por uma noite de outomno
Lá n'essa nave sombria,
Hei-de contigo deitar-me,
Mulher branca e muda e fria!

Hei-de possuir na morte
O teu corpo de marfim,
Mulher que nunca me olhaste,
Que nunca pensaste em mim...

E quando, no fim do mundo,
A trombêta, além, se ouvir,
Apertar-te-hei mais ainda,
--Não te deixarei partir!

A tua boca formosa
Será sempre dos meus beijos;
E o teu corpo a minha patria,
A patria dos meus desejos.

+III+

Andáva a lua nos céus
Com o seu bando de estrelas.

Na minha alcova,
Ardiam vellas,
Em candelabros de bronze.

Pelo chão, em desalinho,
Os velludos pareciam
Ondas de sangue e ondas de vinho.

Elle olhava-me scismado;
E eu,
Placidamente, fumava,
Vendo a lua branca e núa
Que pelos céus caminhava.

Aproximou-se; e em delirio
Procurou ávidamente,
E ávidamente beijou
A minha boca de cravo
Que a beijar se recusou.

Arrastou-me para Elle,
E, encostado ao meu hombro,
Fallou-me d'um pagem loiro
Que morrêra de Saudade,
À beira-mar, a cantar...

Olhei o céu!
Agora, a lua, fugia,
Entre nuvens que tornavam
A linda noite sombria.

Déram-se as bocas n'um beijo,
--Um beijo nervoso e lento...
O homem cede ao desejo
Como a nuvem cede ao vento.

Vinha longe a madrugada.

Por fim,
Largando esse corpo
Que adormecêra cansado
E que eu beijára loucamente
Sem sentir,
Bebia vinho, perdidamente,
Bebia vinho... até cahir.

+IV+

Bemdito sejas,
Meu verdadeiro conforto
E meu verdadeiro amigo!

Quando a sombra, quando a noite
Dos altos céus vem descendo,
A minha dôr,
Estremecendo, acórda...

A minha dôr é um leão
Que lentamente mordendo
Me devora o coração.

Canto e choro amargamente;
Mas a dôr, indiferente,
Continúa...

Então,
Febríl, quase louco,
Corro a ti, vinho louvado!
--E a minha dôr adormece,
E o leão é socegado.

Quanto mais bêbo mais dórme:
Vinho adorado,
O teu poder é enorme!

E eu vos digo, almas em chaga,
Ó almas tristes sangrando:
Andarei sempre
Em constante bebedeira!

Grande vida!

--Ter o vinho por amante
E a morte por companheira!

THE LAY OF ELIDUC

by Marie de France

from French Mediaeval Romances...

Now will I rehearse before you a very ancient Breton Lay. As the tale was told to me, so, in turn, will I tell it over again, to the best of my art and knowledge. Hearken now to my story, its why and its reason.

In Brittany there lived a knight, so courteous and so brave, that in all the realm there was no worthier lord than he. This knight was named Eliduc. He had wedded in his youth a noble lady of proud race and name. They had long dwelt together in peace and content, for their hearts were fixed on one another in faith and loyalty. Now it chanced that Eliduc sought his fortune in a far land, where there was a great war. There he loved a Princess, the daughter of the King and Queen of those parts. Guillardun was the maiden's name, and in all the realm was none more fair. The wife of Eliduc had to name, Guildeluec, in her own country. By reason of these two ladies their story is known as the Lay of Guildeluec and Guillardun, but at first it was rightly called the Lay of Eliduc. The name is a little matter; but if you hearken to me you shall learn the story of these three lovers, in its pity and its truth.

Eliduc had as lord and suzerain, the King of Brittany over Sea. The knight was greatly loved and cherished of his prince, by reason of his long and loyal service. When the King's business took him from his realm, Eliduc was his master's Justice and Seneschal. He governed the country well and wisely, and held it from the foe with a strong hand. Nevertheless, in spite of all, much evil was appointed unto him. Eliduc was a mighty hunter, and by the King's grace, he would chase the stag within the woods. He was cunning and fair as Tristan, and so wise in venery, that the oldest forester might not gainsay him in aught concerning the shaw. But by reason of malice and envy, certain men accused him to the King that he had meddled with the royal pleasaunce. The King bade Eliduc to avoid his Court. He gave no reason for his commandment, and the knight might learn nothing of the cause. Often he prayed the King that he might know whereof he was accused. Often he begged his lord not to heed the specious and crafty words of his foes. He called to mind the wounds he had gained in his master's wars, but was answered never a word. When Eliduc found that he might get no speech with his lord, it became his honour to depart. He returned to his house, and calling his friends around him, opened out to them this business of the King's wrath, in recompense for his faithful service.

"I did not reckon on a King's gratitude; but as the proverb says, it is useless for a farmer to dispute with the horse in his plough. The wise and virtuous man keeps faith to his lord, and bears goodwill to his neighbour, not for what he may receive in return."

Then the knight told his friends that since he might no longer stay in his own country, he should cross the sea to the realm of Logres, and sojourn there awhile, for his solace. His fief he placed in the hands of his wife, and he required of his men, and of all who held him dear, that they would serve her loyally. Having given good counsel to the utmost of his power, the knight prepared him for the road. Right heavy were his friends and kin, that he must go forth from amongst them.

Eliduc took with him ten knights of his household, and set out on his journey. His dame came with him so far as she was able, wringing her hands, and making much sorrow, at the departure of her husband. At the end he pledged good faith to her, as she to him, and so she returned to her own home. Eliduc went his way, till he came to a haven on the sea. He took ship, and sailed to the realm of Totenois, for many kings dwell in that country, and ever there were strife and war. Now, near to Exeter, in this land, there dwelt a King, right rich and strong, but old and very full of years. He had no son of his body, but one maid only, young, and of an age to wed. Since he would not bestow this damsel on a certain prince of his neighbours, this lord made mortal war upon his fellow, spoiling and wasting all his land. The ancient King, for surety, had set his daughter within a castle, fair and very strong. He had charged the sergeants not to issue forth from the gates, and for the rest there was none so bold as to seek to storm the keep, or even to joust about the barriers. When Eliduc was told of this quarrel, he needed to go no farther, and sojourned for awhile in the land. He turned over in his mind which of these princes dealt unjustly with his neighbour. Since he deemed that the aged king was the more vexed and sorely pressed in the matter, he resolved to aid him to the best of his might, and to take arms in his service. Eliduc, therefore, wrote letters to the King, telling him that he had quitted his own country, and sought refuge in the King's realm. For his part he was willing to fight as a mercenary in the King's quarrel, and if a safe conduct were given him, he and the knights of his company would ride, forthwith, to their master's aid. This letter, Eliduc sent by the hands of his squires to the King. When the ancient lord had read the letter, he rejoiced greatly, and made much of the messengers. He summoned his constable, and commanded him swiftly to write out the safe conduct, that would bring the baron to his side. For the rest he bade that the messengers meetly should be lodged and apparelled, and that such money should be given them as would be sufficient to their needs. Then he sealed the safe conduct with his royal seal, and sent it to Eliduc, straightway, by a sure hand.

When Eliduc came in answer to the summons, he was received with great honour by the King. His lodging was appointed in the house of a grave and courteous burgess of the city, who bestowed the fairest chamber on his guest. Eliduc fared softly, both at bed and board. He called to his table such good knights as were in misease, by reason of prison or

of war. He charged his men that none should be so bold as to take pelf or penny from the citizens of the town, during the first forty days of their sojourn. But on the third day, it was bruited about the streets, that the enemy were near at hand. The country folk deemed that they approached to invest the city, and to take the gates by storm. When the noise and clamour of the fearful burgesses came to the ears of Eliduc, he and his company donned their harness, and got to horse, as quickly as they might. Forty horsemen mounted with him; as to the rest, many lay sick or hurt within the city, and others were captives in the hands of the foe. These forty stout sergeants waited for no sounding of trumpets; they hastened to seek their captain at his lodging, and rode at his back through the city gate.

"Sir," said they, "where you go, there we will follow, and what you bid us, that shall we do."

"Friends," made answer the knight, "I thank you for your fellowship. There is no man amongst us but who wishes to molest the foe, and do them all the mischief that he is able. If we await them in the town, we defend ourselves with the shield, and not with the sword. To my mind it is better to fall in the field than to hide behind walls; but if any of you have a wiser counsel to offer, now let him speak."

"Sir," replied a soldier of the company, "through the wood, in good faith, there runs a path, right strict and narrow. It is the wont of the enemy to approach our city by this track. After their deeds of arms before the walls, it is their custom to return by the way they came, helmet on saddle bow, and hauberk unbraced. If we might catch them, unready in the path, we could trouble them very grievously, even though it be at the peril of our lives."

"Friends," answered Eliduc, "you are all the King's men, and are bound to serve him faithfully, even to the death. Come, now, with me where I will go, and do that thing which you shall see me do. I give you my word as a loyal gentleman, that no harm shall hap to any. If we gain spoil and riches from the foe, each shall have his lot in the ransom. At the least we may do them much hurt and mischief in this quarrel."

Eliduc set his men in ambush, near by that path, within the wood. He told over to them, like a cunning captain, the crafty plan he had devised, and taught them how to play their parts, and to call upon his name. When the foe had entered on that perilous path, and were altogether taken in the snare, Eliduc cried his name, and summoned his companions to bear themselves like men. This they did stoutly, and assailed their enemy so fiercely that he was dismayed beyond measure, and his line being broken, fled to the forest. In this fight was the constable taken, together with fifty and five other lords, who owned themselves prisoners, and were given to the keeping of the squires. Great was the spoil in horse and harness, and marvellous was the

wealth they gained in gold and ransom. So having done such great deeds in so short a space, they returned to the city, joyous and content.

The King looked forth from a tower. He feared grievously for his men, and made his complaint of Eliduc, who--he deemed--had betrayed him in his need. Upon the road he saw a great company, charged and laden with spoil. Since the number of those who returned was more than those who went forth, the king knew not again his own. He came down from the tower, in doubt and sore trouble, bidding that the gates should be made fast, and that men should mount upon the walls. For such coil as this, there was slender warrant. A squire who was sent out, came back with all speed, and showed him of this adventure. He told over the story of the ambush, and the tale of the prisoners. He rehearsed how the constable was taken, and that many a knight was wounded, and many a brave man slain. When the King might give credence thereto, he had more joy than ever king before. He got him from his tower, and going before Eliduc, he praised him to his face, and rendered him the captives as a gift. Eliduc gave the King's bounty to his men. He bestowed on them besides, all the harness and the spoil; keeping, for his part, but three knights, who had won much honour in the battle. From this day the King loved and cherished Eliduc very dearly. He held the knight, and his company, for a full year in his service, and at the end of the year, such faith had he in the knight's loyalty, that he appointed him Seneschal and Constable of his realm.

Eliduc was not only a brave and wary captain; he was also a courteous gentleman, right goodly to behold.

That fair maiden, the daughter of the King, heard tell of his deeds, and desired to see his face, because of the good men spake of him. She sent her privy chamberlain to the knight, praying him to come to her house, that she might solace herself with the story of his deeds, for greatly she wondered that he had no care for her friendship. Eliduc gave answer to the chamberlain that he would ride forthwith, since much he desired to meet so high a dame. He bade his squire to saddle his destrier, and rode to the palace, to have speech with the lady. Eliduc stood without the lady's chamber, and prayed the chamberlain to tell the dame that he had come, according to her wish. The chamberlain came forth with a smiling face, and straightway led him in the chamber. When the princess saw the knight, she cherished him very sweetly, and welcomed him in the most honourable fashion. The knight gazed upon the lady, who was passing fair to see. He thanked her courteously, that she was pleased to permit him to have speech with so high a princess. Guillardun took Eliduc by the hand, and seated him upon the bed, near her side. They spake together of many things, for each found much to say. The maiden looked closely upon the knight, his face and semblance; to her heart she said that never before had she beheld so comely a man. Her eyes might find no blemish in his person, and Love knocked upon her heart, requiring her to love, since her time

had come. She sighed, and her face lost its fair colour; but she cared only to hide her trouble from the knight, lest he should think her the less maidenly therefore. When they had talked together for a great space, Eliduc took his leave, and went his way. The lady would have kept him longer gladly, but since she did not dare, she allowed him to depart. Eliduc returned to his lodging, very pensive and deep in thought. He called to mind that fair maiden, the daughter of his King, who so sweetly had bidden him to her side, and had kissed him farewell, with sighs that were sweeter still. He repented him right earnestly that he had lived so long a while in the land without seeking her face, but promised that often he would enter her palace now. Then he remembered the wife whom he had left in his own house. He recalled the parting between them, and the covenant he made, that good faith and stainless honour should be ever betwixt the twain. But the maiden, from whom he came, was willing to take him as her knight! If such was her will, might any pluck him from her hand?

All night long, that fair maiden, the daughter of the King, had neither rest nor sleep. She rose up, very early in the morning, and commanding her chamberlain, opened out to him all that was in her heart. She leaned her brow against the casement.

"By my faith," she said, "I am fallen into a deep ditch, and sorrow has come upon me. I love Eliduc, the good knight, whom my father made his Seneschal. I love him so dearly that I turn the whole night upon my bed, and cannot close my eyes, nor sleep. If he assured me of his heart, and loved me again, all my pleasure should be found in his happiness. Great might be his profit, for he would become King of this realm, and little enough is it for his deserts, so courteous is he and wise. If he have nothing better than friendship to give me, I choose death before life, so deep is my distress."

When the princess had spoken what it pleased her to say, the chamberlain, whom she had bidden, gave her loyal counsel.

"Lady," said he, "since you have set your love upon this knight, send him now--if so it please you--some goodly gift-girdle or scarf or ring. If he receive the gift with delight, rejoicing in your favour, you may be assured that he loves you. There is no Emperor, under Heaven, if he were tendered your tenderness, but would go the more lightly for your grace."

The damsel hearkened to the counsel of her chamberlain, and made reply, "If only I knew that he desired my love! Did ever maiden woo her knight before, by asking whether he loved or hated her? What if he make of me a mock and a jest in the ears of his friends! Ah, if the secrets of the heart were but written on the face! But get you ready, for go you must, at once."

"Lady," answered the chamberlain, "I am ready to do your bidding."

"You must greet the knight a hundred times in my name, and will place my girdle in his hand, and this my golden ring."

When the chamberlain had gone upon his errand, the maiden was so sick at heart, that for a little she would have bidden him return. Nevertheless, she let him go his way, and eased her shame with words.

"Alas, what has come upon me, that I should put my heart upon a stranger. I know nothing of his folk, whether they be mean or high; nor do I know whether he will part as swiftly as he came. I have done foolishly, and am worthy of blame, since I have bestowed my love very lightly. I spoke to him yesterday for the first time, and now I pray him for his love. Doubtless he will make me a song! Yet if he be the courteous gentleman I believe him, he will understand, and not deal hardly with me. At least the dice are cast, and if he may not love me, I shall know myself the most woeful of ladies, and never taste of joy all the days of my life."

Whilst the maiden lamented in this fashion, the chamberlain hastened to the lodging of Eliduc. He came before the knight, and having saluted him in his lady's name, he gave to his hand the ring and the girdle. The knight thanked him earnestly for the gifts. He placed the ring upon his finger, and the girdle he girt about his body. He said no more to the chamberlain, nor asked him any questions; save only that he proffered him a gift. This the messenger might not have, and returned the way he came. The chamberlain entered in the palace and found the princess within her chamber. He greeted her on the part of the knight, and thanked her for her bounty.

"Diva, diva," cried the lady hastily, "hide nothing from me; does he love me, or does he not?"

"Lady," answered the chamberlain, "as I deem, he loves you, and truly. Eliduc is no cozener with words. I hold him for a discreet and prudent gentleman, who knows well how to hide what is in his heart. I gave him greeting in your name, and granted him your gifts. He set the ring upon his finger, and as to your girdle, he girt it upon him, and belted it tightly about his middle. I said no more to him, nor he to me; but if he received not your gifts in tenderness, I am the more deceived. Lady, I have told you his words: I cannot tell you his thoughts. Only, mark carefully what I am about to say. If Eliduc had not a richer gift to offer, he would not have taken your presents at my hand."

"It pleases you to jest," said the lady. "I know well that Eliduc does not altogether hate me. Since my only fault is to cherish him too

fondly, should he hate me, he would indeed be blameworthy. Never again by you, or by any other, will I require him of aught, or look to him for comfort. He shall see that a maiden's love is no slight thing, lightly given, and lightly taken again--but, perchance, he will not dwell in the realm so long as to know of the matter."

"Lady, the knight has covenanted to serve the King, in all loyalty, for the space of a year. You have full leisure to tell, whatever you desire him to learn."

When the maiden heard that Eliduc remained in the country, she rejoiced very greatly. She was glad that the knight would sojourn awhile in her city, for she knew naught of the torment he endured, since first he looked upon her. He had neither peace nor delight, for he could not get her from his mind. He reproached himself bitterly. He called to remembrance the covenant he made with his wife, when he departed from his own land, that he would never be false to his oath. But his heart was a captive now, in a very strong prison. He desired greatly to be loyal and honest, but he could not deny his love for the maiden--Guillardun, so frank and so fair.

Eliduc strove to act as his honour required. He had speech and sight of the lady, and did not refuse her kiss and embrace. He never spoke of love, and was diligent to offend in nothing. He was careful in this, because he would keep faith with his wife, and would attempt no matter against his King. Very grievously he pained himself, but at the end he might do no more. Eliduc caused his horse to be saddled, and calling his companions about him, rode to the castle to get audience of the King. He considered, too, that he might see his lady, and learn what was in her heart. It was the hour of meat, and the King having risen from table, had entered in his daughter's chamber. The King was at chess, with a lord who had but come from over-sea. The lady sat near the board, to watch the movements of the game. When Eliduc came before the prince, he welcomed him gladly, bidding him to seat himself close at hand. Afterwards he turned to his daughter, and said, "Princess, it becomes you to have a closer friendship with this lord, and to treat him well and worshipfully. Amongst five hundred, there is no better knight than he."

When the maiden had listened demurely to her father's commandment, there was no gayer lady than she. She rose lightly to her feet, and taking the knight a little from the others, seated him at her side. They remained silent, because of the greatness of their love. She did not dare to speak the first, and to him the maid was more dreadful than a knight in mail. At the end Eliduc thanked her courteously for the gifts she had sent him; never was grace so precious and so kind. The maiden made answer to the knight, that very dear to her was the use he had found for her ring, and the girdle with which he had belted his body. She loved him so fondly that she wished him for her husband.

If she might not have her wish, one thing she knew well, that she would take no living man, but would die unwed. She trusted he would not deny her hope.

"Lady," answered the knight, "I have great joy in your love, and thank you humbly for the goodwill you bear me. I ought indeed to be a happy man, since you deign to show me at what price you value our friendship. Have you remembered that I may not remain always in your realm? I covenanted with the King to serve him as his man for the space of one year. Perchance I may stay longer in his service, for I would not leave him till his quarrel be ended. Then I shall return to my own land; so, fair lady, you permit me to say farewell."

The maiden made answer to her knight, "Fair friend, right sweetly I thank you for your courteous speech. So apt a clerk will know, without more words, that he may have of me just what he would. It becomes my love to give faith to all you say."

The two lovers spoke together no further; each was well assured of what was in the other's heart. Eliduc rode back to his lodging, right joyous and content. Often he had speech with his friend, and passing great was the love which grew between the twain.

Eliduc pressed on the war so fiercely that in the end he took captive the King who troubled his lord, and had delivered the land from its foes. He was greatly praised of all as a crafty captain in the field, and a hardy comrade with the spear. The poor and the minstrel counted him a generous knight. About this time that King, who had bidden Eliduc avoid his realm, sought diligently to find him. He had sent three messengers beyond the seas to seek his ancient Seneschal. A strong enemy had wrought him much grief and loss. All his castles were taken from him, and all his country was a spoil to the foe. Often and sorely he repented him of the evil counsel to which he had given ear. He mourned the absence of his mightiest knight, and drove from his councils those false lords who, for malice and envy, had defamed him. These he outlawed for ever from his realm. The King wrote letters to Eliduc, conjuring him by the loving friendship that was once between them, and summoning him as a vassal is required of his lord, to hasten to his aid, in that his bitter need. When Eliduc heard these tidings they pressed heavily upon him, by reason of the grievous love he bore the dame. She, too, loved him with a woman's whole heart. Between the two there was nothing but the purest love and tenderness. Never by word or deed had they spoiled their friendship. To speak a little closely together; to give some fond and foolish gift; this was the sum of their love. In her wish and hope the maiden trusted to hold the knight in her land, and to have him as her lord. Naught she deemed that he was wedded to a wife beyond the sea.

"Alas," said Eliduc, "I have loitered too long in this country, and

have gone astray. Here I have set my heart on a maiden, Guillardun, the daughter of the King, and she, on me. If, now, we part, there is no help that one, or both, of us, must die. Yet go I must. My lord requires me by letters, and by the oath of fealty that I have sworn. My own honour demands that I should return to my wife. I dare not stay; needs must I go. I cannot wed my lady, for not a priest in Christendom would make us man and wife. All things turn to blame. God, what a tearing asunder will our parting be! Yet there is one who will ever think me in the right, though I be held in scorn of all. I will be guided by her wishes, and what she counsels that will I do. The King, her sire, is troubled no longer by any war. First, I will go to him, praying that I may return to my own land, for a little, because of the need of my rightful lord. Then I will seek out the maiden, and show her the whole business. She will tell me her desire, and I shall act according to her wish."

The knight hesitated no longer as to the path he should follow. He went straight to the King, and craved leave to depart. He told him the story of his lord's distress, and read, and placed in the King's hands, the letters calling him back to his home. When the King had read the writing, and knew that Eliduc purposed to depart, he was passing sad and heavy. He offered the knight the third part of his kingdom, with all the treasure that he pleased to ask, if he would remain at his side. He offered these things to the knight--these, and the gratitude of all his days besides.

"Do not tempt me, sire," replied the knight. "My lord is in such deadly peril, and his letters have come so great a way to require me, that go I must to aid him in his need. When I have ended my task, I will return very gladly, if you care for my services, and with me a goodly company of knights to fight in your quarrels."

The King thanked Eliduc for his words, and granted him graciously the leave that he demanded. He gave him, moreover, all the goods of his house; gold and silver, hound and horses, silken cloths, both rich and fair, these he might have at his will. Eliduc took of them discreetly, according to his need. Then, very softly, he asked one other gift. If it pleased the King, right willingly would he say farewell to the princess, before he went. The King replied that it was his pleasure, too. He sent a page to open the door of the maiden's chamber, and to tell her the knight's request. When she saw him, she took him by the hand, and saluted him very sweetly. Eliduc was the more fain of counsel than of claspings. He seated himself by the maiden's side, and as shortly as he might, commenced to show her of the business. He had done no more than read her of his letters, than her face lost its fair colour, and near she came to swoon. When Eliduc saw her about to fall, he knew not what he did, for grief. He kissed her mouth, once and again, and wept above her, very tenderly. He took, and held her fast in his arms, till she had returned from her swoon.

"Fair dear friend," said he softly, "bear with me while I tell you that you are my life and my death, and in you is all my comfort. I have bidden farewell to your father, and purposed to go back to my own land, for reason of this bitter business of my lord. But my will is only in your pleasure, and whatever the future brings me, your counsel I will do."

"Since you cannot stay," said the maiden, "take me with you, wherever you go. If not, my life is so joyless without you, that I would wish to end it with my knife."

Very sweetly made answer Sir Eliduc, for in honesty he loved honest maid, "Fair friend, I have sworn faith to your father, and am his man. If I carried you with me, I should give the lie to my troth. Let this covenant be made between us. Should you give me leave to return to my own land I swear to you on my honour as a knight, that I will come again on any day that you shall name. My life is in your hands. Nothing on earth shall keep me from your side, so only that I have life and health."

Then she, who loved so fondly, granted her knight permission to depart, and fixed the term, and named the day for his return. Great was their sorrow that the hour had come to bid farewell. They gave rings of gold for remembrance, and sweetly kissed adieu. So they severed from each other's arms.

Eliduc sought the sea, and with a fair wind, crossed swiftly to the other side. His lord was greatly content to learn the tidings of his knight's return. His friends and his kinsfolk came to greet him, and the common folk welcomed him very gladly. But, amongst them all, none was so blithe at his home-coming as the fair and prudent lady who was his wife. Despite this show of friendship, Eliduc was ever sad, and deep in thought. He went heavily, till he might look upon his friend. He felt no happiness, nor made pretence of any, till he should meet with her again. His wife was sick at heart, because of the coldness of her husband. She took counsel with her soul, as to what she had done amiss. Often she asked him privily, if she had come short or offended in any measure, whilst he was without the realm. If she was accused by any, let him tell her the accusation, that she might purge herself of the offence.

"Wife," answered Eliduc, "neither I, nor any other, charge you with aught that is against your honour to do. The cause of my sorrow is in myself. I have pledged my faith to the King of that country, from whence I come, that I will return to help him in his need. When my lord the King has peace in his realm, within eight days I shall be once more upon the sea. Great travail I must endure, and many pains I shall suffer, in readiness for that hour. Return I must, and till then

I have no mind for anything but toil; for I will not give the lie to my plighted word."

Eliduc put his fief once more in the hands of his dame. He sought his lord, and aided him to the best of his might. By the counsel and prowess of the knight, the King came again into his own. When the term appointed by his lady, and the day she named for his return drew near, Eliduc wrought in such fashion that peace was accorded between the foes. Then the knight made him ready for his journey, and took thought to the folk he should carry with him. His choice fell on two of his nephews, whom he loved very dearly, and on a certain chamberlain of his household. These were trusted servitors, who were of his inmost mind, and knew much of his counsel. Together with these went his squires, these only, for Eliduc had no care to take many. All these, nephew and squire and chamberlain, Eliduc made to promise, and confirm by an oath, that they would reveal nothing of his business.

The company put to sea without further tarrying, and, crossing quickly, came to that land where Eliduc so greatly desired to be. The knight sought a hostel some distance from the haven, for he would not be seen of any, nor have it bruited that Eliduc was returned. He called his chamberlain, and sent him to his friend, bearing letters that her knight had come, according to the covenant that had been made. At nightfall, before the gates were made fast, Eliduc issued forth from the city, and followed after his messenger. He had clothed himself in mean apparel, and rode at a footpace straight to the city, where dwelt the daughter of the King. The chamberlain arrived before the palace, and by dint of asking and prying, found himself within the lady's chamber. He saluted the maiden, and told her that her lover was near. When Guillardun heard these tidings she was astonished beyond measure, and for joy and pity wept right tenderly. She kissed the letters of her friend, and the messenger who brought such welcome tidings. The chamberlain prayed the lady to attire and make her ready to join her friend. The day was spent in preparing for the adventure, according to such plan as had been devised. When dark was come, and all was still, the damsel stole forth from the palace, and the chamberlain with her. For fear that any man should know her again, the maiden had hidden, beneath a riding cloak, her silken gown, embroidered with gold. About the space of a bow shot from the city gate, there was a coppice standing within a fair meadow. Near by this wood, Eliduc and his comrades awaited the coming of Guillardun. When Eliduc saw the lady, wrapped in her mantle, and his chamberlain leading her by the hand, he got from his horse, and kissed her right tenderly. Great joy had his companions at so fair a sight. He set her on the horse, and climbing before her, took bridle in glove, and returned to the haven, with all the speed he might. He entered forthwith in the ship, which put to sea, having on board none, save Eliduc, his men, and his lady, Guillardun. With a fair wind, and a quiet hour, the sailors thought that they would swiftly come to shore.

But when their journey was near its end, a sudden tempest arose on the sea. A mighty wind drove them far from their harbourage, so that their rudder was broken, and their sail torn from the mast. Devoutly they cried on St. Nicholas, St. Clement, and Madame St. Mary, to aid them in this peril. They implored the Mother that she would approach her Son, not to permit them to perish, but to bring them to the harbour where they would come. Without sail or oar, the ship drifted here and there, at the mercy of the storm. They were very close to death, when one of the company, with a loud voice began to cry, "What need is there of prayers! Sir, you have with you, her, who brings us to our death. We shall never win to land, because you, who already have a faithful wife, seek to wed this foreign woman, against God and His law, against honour and your plighted troth. Grant us to cast her in the sea, and straightway the winds and the waves will be still."

When Eliduc heard these words he was like to come to harm for rage.

"Bad servant and felon traitor," he cried, "you should pay dearly for your speech, if I might leave my lady."

Eliduc held his friend fast in his arms, and cherished her as well as he was able. When the lady heard that her knight was already wedded in his own realm, she swooned where she lay. Her face became pale and discoloured; she neither breathed nor sighed, nor could any bring her any comfort. Those who carried her to a sheltered place, were persuaded that she was but dead, because of the fury of the storm. Eliduc was passing heavy. He rose to his feet, and hastening to his squire, smote him so grievously with an oar, that he fell senseless on the deck. He haled him by his legs to the side of the ship and flung the body in the sea, where it was swiftly swallowed by the waves. He went to the broken rudder, and governed the nave so skilfully, that it presently drew to land. So, having come to their fair haven, they cast anchor, and made fast their bridge to the shore. Dame Guillardun lay yet in her swoon, and seemed no other than if she were really dead. Eliduc's sorrow was all the more, since he deemed that he had slain her with his hand. He inquired of his companions in what near place they might lay the lady to her rest, "for I will not bid her farewell, till she is put in holy ground with such pomp and rite as befit the obsequies of the daughter of a King." His comrades answered him never a word, for they were all bemused by reason of what had befallen. Eliduc, therefore, considered within himself to what place he should carry the lady. His own home was so near the haven where he had come, that very easily they could ride there before evening. He called to mind that in his realm there was a certain great forest, both long and deep. Within this wood there was a little chapel, served by a holy hermit for forty years, with whom Eliduc had oftentimes spoken.

"To this holy man," he said, "I will bear my lady. In his chapel he shall bury her sweet body. I will endow him so richly of my lands,

that upon her chantry shall be founded a mighty abbey. There some convent of monks or nuns or canons shall ever hold her in remembrance, praying God to grant her mercy in His day."

Eliduc got to horse, but first took oath of his comrades that never, by them, should be discovered, that which they should see. He set his friend before him on the palfrey, and thus the living and the dead rode together, till they had entered the wood, and come before the chapel. The squires called and beat upon the door, but it remained fast, and none was found to give them any answer. Eliduc bade that one should climb through a window, and open the door from within. When they had come within the chapel they found a new made tomb, and writ thereon, that the holy hermit having finished his course, was made perfect, eight days before Passing sad was Eliduc, and esmayed. His companions would have digged a second grave, and set therein, his friend; but the knight would in no wise consent, for--he said--he purposed to take counsel of the priests of his country, as to building some church or abbey above her tomb. "At this hour we will but lay her body before the altar, and commend her to God His holy keeping." He commanded them to bring their mantles and make a bed upon the altar-pace. Thereon they laid the maiden, and having wrapped her close in her lover's cloak, left her alone. When the moment came for Eliduc to take farewell of his lady, he deemed that his own last hour had come. He kissed her eyes and her face.

"Fair friend," said he, "if it be pleasing to God, never will I bear sword or lance again, or seek the pleasures of this mortal world. Fair friend, in an ill hour you saw me! Sweet lady, in a bitter hour you followed me to death! Fairest, now were you a queen, were it not for the pure and loyal love you set upon me? Passing sad of heart am I for you, my friend. The hour that I have seen you in your shroud, I will take the habit of some holy order, and every day, upon your tomb, I will tell over the chaplet of my sorrow."

Having taken farewell of the maiden, Eliduc came forth from the chapel, and closed the doors. He sent messages to his wife, that he was returning to his house, but weary and overborne. When the dame heard these tidings, she was happy in her heart, and made ready to greet him. She received her lord tenderly; but little joy came of her welcome, for she got neither smiles in answer, nor tender words in return. She dared not inquire the reason, during the two days Eliduc remained in the house. The knight heard Mass very early in the morning, and then set forth on the road leading to the chapel where the maiden lay. He found her as he had parted, for she had not come back from her swoon, and there was neither stir in her, nor breath. He marvelled greatly, for he saw her, vermeil and white, as he had known her in life. She had lost none of her sweet colour, save that she was a little blanched. He wept bitterly above her, and entreated for her soul. Having made his prayer, he went again to his house.

On a day when Eliduc went forth, his wife called to her a varlet of her household, commanding him to follow his lord afar off, and mark where he went, and on what business. She promised to give him harness and horses, if he did according to her will. The varlet hid himself in the wood, and followed so cunningly after his lord, that he was not perceived. He watched the knight enter the chapel, and heard the cry and lamentation that he made. When Eliduc came out, the varlet hastened to his mistress, and told her what he had seen, the tears and dolour, and all that befell his lord within the hermitage. The lady summoned all her courage.

"We will go together, as soon as we may, to this hermitage. My lord tells me that he rides presently to the Court to speak with the King. I knew that my husband loved this dead hermit very tenderly, but I little thought that his loss would make him mad with grief."

The next day the dame let her lord go forth in peace. When, about noon, Eliduc rode to the Court to greet his King, the lady rose quickly, and carrying the varlet with her, went swiftly to the hermitage. She entered the chapel, and saw the bed upon the altar-pace, and the maiden thereon, like a new sprung rose. Stooping down the lady removed the mantle. She marked the rigid body, the long arms, and the frail white hands, with their slender fingers, folded on the breast. Thus she learned the secret of the sorrow of her lord. She called the varlet within the chapel, and showed him this wonder.

"Seest thou," she said, "this woman, who for beauty shineth as a gem! This lady, in her life, was the lover of my lord. It was for her that all his days were spoiled by grief. By my faith I marvel little at his sorrow, since I, who am a woman too, will--for pity's sake or love--never know joy again, having seen so fair a lady in the dust."

So the wife wept above the body of the maiden. Whilst the lady sat weeping, a weasel came from under the altar, and ran across Guillardun's body. The varlet smote it with his staff, and killed it as it passed. He took the vermin and flung it away. The companion of this weasel presently came forth to seek him. She ran to the place where he lay, and finding that he would not get him on his feet, seemed as one distraught. She went forth from the chapel, and hastened to the wood, from whence she returned quickly, bearing a vermeil flower beneath her teeth. This red flower she placed within the mouth of that weasel the varlet had slain, and immediately he stood upon his feet. When the lady saw this, she cried to the varlet,

"Throw, man, throw, and gain the flower."

The servitor flung his staff, and the weasels fled away, leaving that fair flower upon the floor. The lady rose. She took the flower, and

returned with it swiftly to the altar pace. Within the mouth of the maiden, she set a flower that was more vermeil still. For a short space the dame and the damsel were alike breathless. Then the maiden came to herself, with a sigh. She opened her eyes, and commenced to speak.

"Diva," she said, "have I slept so long, indeed!"

When the lady heard her voice she gave thanks to God. She inquired of the maiden as to her name and degree. The damsel made answer to her, "Lady, I was born in Logres, and am daughter to the King of that realm. Greatly there I loved a knight, named Eliduc, the seneschal of my sire. We fled together from my home, to my own most grievous fault. He never told me that he was wedded to a wife in his own country, and he hid the matter so cunningly, that I knew naught thereof. When I heard tell of his dame, I swooned for pure sorrow. Now I find that this false lover, has, like a felon, betrayed me in a strange land. What will chance to a maiden in so foul a plight? Great is that woman's folly who puts her trust in man."

"Fair damsel," replied the lady, "there is nothing in the whole world that can give such joy to this felon, as to hear that you are yet alive. He deems that you are dead, and every day he beweeeps your swoon in the chapel. I am his wife, and my heart is sick, just for looking on his sorrow. To learn the reason of his grief, I caused him to be followed, and that is why I have found you here. It is a great happiness for me to know that you live. You shall return with me to my home, and I will place you in the tenderness of your friend. Then I shall release him of his marriage troth, since it is my dearest hope to take the veil."

When the wife had comforted the maiden with such words, they went together to her own house. She called to her servitor, and bade him seek his lord. The varlet went here and there, till he lighted on Eliduc. He came before him, and showed him of all these things. Eliduc mounted straightway on his horse, and waiting neither for squire or companion, that same night came to his hall. When he found alive, her, who once was dead, Eliduc thanked his wife for so dear a gift. He rejoiced beyond measure, and of all his days, no day was more happy than this. He kissed the maiden often, and very sweetly she gave him again his kiss, for great was the joy between the twain. The dame looked on their happiness, and knew that her lord meetly had bestowed his love. She prayed him, therefore, that he would grant her leave to depart, since she would serve God as a cloistered nun. Of his wealth she craved such a portion as would permit her to found a convent. He would then be able to wed the maiden on whom his heart was set, for it was neither honest nor seemly that a man should maintain a wife with either hand.

Eliduc could do no otherwise than consent. He gave the permission she asked, and did all according to her will. He endowed the lady of his lands, near by that chapel and hermitage, within the wood. There he built a church with offices and refectory, fair to see. Much wealth he bestowed on the convent, in money and estate. When all was brought to a good end, the lady took the veil upon her head. Thirty other ladies entered in the house with her, and long she ruled them as their Abbess, right wisely and well.

Eliduc wedded with his friend, in great pomp, and passing rich was the marriage feast. They dwelt in unity together for many days, for ever between them was perfect love. They walked uprightly, and gave alms of their goods, till such a time as it became them to turn to God. After much thought, Eliduc built a great church close beside his castle. He endowed it with all his gold and silver, and with the rest of his land. He set priests there, and holy layfolk also, for the business of the house, and the fair services of religion.

When all was builded and ordered, Eliduc offered himself, with them, that he--weak man--might serve the omnipotent God. He set with the Abbess Guildeluec--who once was his dame--that wife whom he loved so dearly well. The Abbess received her as a sister, and welcomed her right honourably. She admonished her in the offices of God, and taught her of the rules and practice of their holy Order. They prayed to God for their friend, that He would grant him mercy in His day. In turn, he entreated God for them. Messages came from convent and monastery as to how they fared, so that each might encourage the other in His way. Each strove painfully, for himself and his, to love God the more dearly, and to abide in His holy faith. Each made a good end, and the mercy of God was abundantly made clear to all.

Of the adventure of these three lovers, the courteous Bretons made this Lay for remembrance, since they deemed it a matter that men should not forget.

Ooo

The Dinner-Party

by Amy Lowell

from Men, Women, & Ghosts

1916

Fish

"So . . ." they said,
With their wine-glasses delicately poised,
Mocking at the thing they cannot understand.
"So . . ." they said again,
Amused and insolent.
The silver on the table glittered,
And the red wine in the glasses
Seemed the blood I had wasted
In a foolish cause.

Game

The gentleman with the grey-and-black whiskers
Sneered languidly over his quail.
Then my heart flew up and laboured,
And I burst from my own holding
And hurled myself forward.
With straight blows I beat upon him,
Furiously, with red-hot anger, I thrust against him.
But my weapon slithered over his polished surface,
And I recoiled upon myself,
Panting.

Drawing-Room

In a dress all softness and half-tones,
Indolent and half-reclined,
She lay upon a couch,
With the firelight reflected in her jewels.
But her eyes had no reflection,
They swam in a grey smoke,
The smoke of smouldering ashes,
The smoke of her cindered heart.

Coffee

They sat in a circle with their coffee-cups.
One dropped in a lump of sugar,

One stirred with a spoon.
I saw them as a circle of ghosts
Sipping blackness out of beautiful china,
And mildly protesting against my coarseness
In being alive.

Talk

They took dead men's souls
And pinned them on their breasts for ornament;
Their cuff-links and tiaras
Were gems dug from a grave;
They were ghouls battenning on exhumed thoughts;
And I took a green liqueur from a servant
So that he might come near me
And give me the comfort of a living thing.

Eleven O'Clock

The front door was hard and heavy,
It shut behind me on the house of ghosts.
I flattened my feet on the pavement
To feel it solid under me;
I ran my hand along the railings
And shook them,
And pressed their pointed bars
Into my palms.
The hurt of it reassured me,
And I did it again and again
Until they were bruised.
When I woke in the night
I laughed to find them aching,
For only living flesh can suffer.

THE TEMPLE TO THE GOD OF WAR

by Im Bang

from Korean Folk Tales

[Yi Hang-bok.--When he was a child a blind fortune-teller came and cast his future, saying, "This boy will be very great indeed."

At seven years of age his father gave him for subject to write a verse on "The Harp and the Sword," and he wrote--

"The Sword pertains to the Hand of the Warrior
And the Harp to the Music of the Ancients."

At eight he took the subject of the "Willow before the Door," and wrote--

"The east wind brushes the brow of the cliff
And the willow on the edge nods fresh and green."

On seeing a picture of a great banquet among the fierce Turks of Central Asia, he wrote thus--

"The hunt is off in the wild dark hills,
And the moon is cold and gray,
While the tramping feet of a thousand horse
Ring on the frosty way.
In the tents of the Turk the music thrills
And the wine-cups chink for joy,
'Mid the noise of the dancer's savage tread
And the lilt of the wild hautboy."

At twelve years of age he was proud, we are told, and haughty. He dressed well, and was envied by the poorer lads of the place, and once he took off his coat and gave it to a boy who looked with envy on him. He gave his shoes as well, and came back barefoot. His mother, wishing to know his mind in the matter, pretended to reprimand him, but he replied, saying, "Mother, when others wanted it so, how could I refuse giving?" His mother pondered these things in her heart.

When he was fifteen he was strong and well-built, and liked vigorous exercise, so that he was a noted wrestler and skilful at shuttlecock. His mother, however, frowned upon these things, saying that they were not dignified, so that he gave them up and confined his

attention to literary studies, graduating at twenty-five years of age.

In 1592, during the Japanese War, when the King escaped to Eui-ju, Yi Hang-bok went with him in his flight, and there he met the Chinese (Ming) representative, who said in surprise to his Majesty, "Do you mean to tell me that you have men in Cho-sen like Yi Hang-bok?" Yang Ho, the general of the rescuing forces, also continually referred to him for advice and counsel. He lived to see the troubles in the reign of the wicked Kwang-hai, and at last went into exile to Puk-chong. When he crossed the Iron Pass near Wonsan, he wrote--

"From the giddy height of the Iron Peak,
I call on the passing cloud,
To take up a lonely exile's tears
In the folds of its feathery shroud,
And drop them as rain on the Palace Gates,
On the King, and his shameless crowd."]

The Story

During the Japanese War in the reign of Son-jo, the Mings sent a great army that came east, drove out the enemy and restored peace. At that time the general of the Mings informed his Korean Majesty that the victory was due to the help of Kwan, the God of War. "This being the case," said he, "you ought not to continue without temples in which to express your gratitude to him." So they built him houses of worship and offered him sacrifice. The Temples built were one to the south and one to the east of the city. In examining sites for these they could not agree on the one to the south. Some wanted it nearer the wall and some farther away. At that time an official, called Yi Hang-bok, was in charge of the conference. On a certain day when Yi was at home a military officer called and wished to see him. Ordering him in he found him a great strapping fellow, splendidly built. His request was that Yi should send out all his retainers till he talked to him privately. They were sent out, and then the stranger gave his message. After he had finished, he said good-bye and left.

Yi had at that time an old friend stopping with him. The friend went out with the servants when they were asked to leave, and now he came back again. When he came in he noticed that the face of the master had a very peculiar expression, and he asked him the reason of it. Yi made no reply at first, but later told his friend that a very extraordinary thing had happened. The military man who had come and called was none other than a messenger of the God of War. His coming, too, was on account of their not yet having decided in regard to the

site for the Temple. "He came," said Yi, "to show me where it ought to be. He urged that it was not a matter for time only, but for the eternities to come. If we do not get it right the God of War will find no peace. I told him in reply that I would do my best. Was this not strange?"

The friend who heard this was greatly exercised, but Yi warned him not to repeat it to any one. Yi used all his efforts, and at last the building was placed on the approved site, where it now stands.

When Icicles Hang by the Wall

When icicles hang by the wall,
And Dick the shepherd blows his nail,
And Tom bears logs into the hall,
And milk comes frozen home in pail,
When blood is nipped, and ways be foul,
Then nightly sings the staring owl,
 To-whit!
To-who!--a merry note,
While greasy Joan doth keel the pot.

When all aloud the wind doth blow,
And coughing drowns the parson's saw,
And birds sit brooding in the snow,
And Marian's nose looks red and raw,
When roasted crabs hiss in the bowl,
Then nightly sings the staring owl,
 To-whit!
To-who!--a merry note,
While greasy Joan doth keel the pot.

WILLIAM SHAKESPEARE.

From "Love's Labor's Lost."

GONERIL,

By A. Mary F. Robinson

from Stories By English Authors: Italy

CHAPTER I THE TWO OLD LADIES

On one of the pleasant hills round Florence, a little beyond Camerata, there stands a house so small that an Englishman would probably take it for a lodge of the great villa behind, whose garden trees at sunset cast their shadow over the cottage and its terrace on to the steep white road. But any of the country people could tell him that this, too, is a _casa signorile_, despite its smallness. It stands somewhat high above the road, a square white house with a projecting roof, and with four green-shuttered windows overlooking the gay but narrow terrace. The beds under the windows would have fulfilled the fancy of that French poet who desired that in his garden one might, in gathering a nosegay, cull a salad, for they boasted little else than sweet basil, small and white, and some tall gray rosemary bushes. Nearer to the door an unusually large oleander faced a strong and sturdy magnolia-tree, and these, with their profusion of red and white sweetness, made amends for the dearth of garden flowers. At either end of the terrace flourished a thicket of gum-cistus, syringa, stephanotis, and geranium bushes; and the wall itself, dropping sheer down to the road, was bordered with the customary Florentine hedge of China roses and irises, now out of bloom. Great terra-cotta flower-pots, covered with devices, were placed at intervals along the wall; as it was summer, the oranges and lemons, full of wonderfully sweet white blossoms and young green fruit, were set there in the sun to ripen.

It was the 17th of June. Although it was after four o'clock, the olives on the steep hill that went down to Florence looked blindingly white, shadeless, and sharp. The air trembled round the bright green cypresses behind the house. The roof steamed. All the windows were shut, all the jalousies shut, yet it was so hot that no one could stir within. The maid slept in the kitchen; the two elderly mistresses of the house dozed upon their beds. Not a movement; not a sound.

Gradually along the steep road from Camerata there came a roll of distant carriage-wheels. The sound came nearer and nearer, till one could see the carriage, and see the driver leading the tired, thin, cab-horse, his bones starting under the shaggy hide. Inside the carriage reclined a handsome, middle-aged lady, with a stern profile turned toward the road; a young girl in pale pink cotton and a broad hat trudged up the hill at the side.

"Goneril," said Miss Hamelyn, "let me beg you again to come inside the carriage."

"Oh no, Aunt Margaret; I'm not a bit tired."

"But I have asked you; that is reason enough."

"It's so hot!" cried Goneril.

"That is why I object to your walking."

"But if it's so hot for me, just think how hot it must be for the horse."

Goneril cast a commiserating glance at the poor, halting, wheezing nag.

"The horse, probably," rejoined Miss Hamelyn, "does not suffer from malaria, neither has he kept his aunt in Florence nursing him till the middle heat of the summer."

"True!" said Goneril. Then, after a few minutes, "I'll get in, Aunt Margaret, on one condition."

"In my time young people did not make conditions."

"Very well, auntie; I'll get in, and you shall answer all my questions when you feel inclined."

The carriage stopped. The poor horse panted at his ease, while the girl seated herself beside Miss Hamelyn. Then for a few minutes they drove on in silence past the orchards; past the olive-yards, yellow underneath the ripening corn; past the sudden wide views of the mountains, faintly crimson in the mist of heat, and, on the other side, of Florence, the towers and domes steaming beside the hazy river.

"How hot it looks down there!" cried Goneril.

"How hot it feels!" echoed Miss Hamelyn, rather grimly.

"Yes, I am so glad you can get away at last, dear, poor old auntie." Then, a little later, "Won't you tell me something about the old ladies with whom you are going to leave me?"

Miss Hamelyn was mollified by Goneril's obedience.

"They are very nice old ladies," she said; "I met them at Mrs. Gorthrup's." But this was not at all what the young girl wanted.

"Only think, Aunt Margaret," she cried, impatiently, "I am to stay there for at least six weeks, and I know nothing about them, not what age they are, nor if they are tall or short, jolly or prim, pretty, or ugly, not

even if they speak English!"

"They speak English," said Miss Hamelyn, beginning at the end. "One of them is English, or at least Irish: Miss Prunty."

"And the other?"

"She is an Italian, Signora Petrucci; she used to be very handsome."

"Oh!" said Goneril, looking pleased. "I'm glad she's handsome, and that they speak English. But they are not relations?"

"No, they are not connected; they are friends."

"And have they always lived together?"

"Ever since Madame Lilli died," and Miss Hamelyn named a very celebrated singer.

"Why!" cried Goneril, quite excited; "were they singers too?"

"Madame Petrucci; nevertheless a lady of the highest respectability. Miss Prunty was Madame Lilli's secretary."

"How nice!" cried the young girl; "how interesting! O auntie, I'm so glad you found them out."

"So am I, child; but please remember it is not an ordinary pension. They only take you, Goneril, till you are strong enough to travel, as an especial favour to me and to their old friend, Mrs. Gorthrup."

"I'll remember, auntie."

By this time they were driving under the terrace in front of the little house.

"Goneril," said the elder lady, "I shall leave you outside; you can play in the garden or the orchard."

"Very well."

Miss Hamelyn left the carriage and ascended the steep little flight of steps that leads from the road to the cottage garden.

In the porch a singular figure was awaiting her.

"Good-afternoon, Madame Petrucci," said Miss Hamelyn.

A slender old lady, over sixty, rather tall, in a brown silk skirt, and

a white burnoose that showed the shrunken slimness of her arms, came eagerly forward. She was rather pretty, with small refined features, large expressionless blue eyes, and long whitish-yellow ringlets down her cheeks, in the fashion of forty years ago.

"Oh, _dear_ Miss Hamelyn," she cried, "how _glad_ I am to see you! And have you brought your _charming_ young relation?"

She spoke with a languid foreign accent, and with an emphatic and bountiful use of adjectives, that gave to our severer generation an impression of insincerity. Yet it was said with truth that Giulia Petrucci had never forgotten a friend nor an enemy.

"Goneril is outside," said Miss Hamelyn. "How is Miss Prunty?"

"Brigida? Oh, you must come inside and see my invaluable Brigida. She is, as usual, fatiguing herself with our accounts." The old lady led the way into the darkened parlour. It was small and rather stiff. As one's eyes became accustomed to the dim green light one noticed the incongruity of the furniture: the horsehair chairs and sofa, and large accountant's desk with ledgers; the large Pleyel grand piano; a bookcase, in which all the books were rare copies or priceless MSS. of old-fashioned operas; hanging against the wall an inlaid guitar and some faded laurel crowns; moreover, a fine engraving of a composer, twenty years ago the most popular man in Italy; lastly, an oil-colour portrait, by Winterman, of a fascinating blonde, with very bare white shoulders, holding in her hands a scroll, on which were inscribed some notes of music, under the title Giulia Petrucci. In short, the private parlour of an elderly and respectable diva of the year '40.

"Brigida!" cried Madame Petrucci, going to the door. "Brigida! our charming English friend is arrived!"

"All right!" answered a strong, hearty voice from upstairs. "I'm coming."

"You must excuse me, dear Miss Hamelyn," went on Madame Petrucci. "You must excuse me for shouting in your presence, but we have only one little servant, and during this suffocating weather I find that any movement reminds me of approaching age." The old lady smiled as if that time were still far ahead.

"I am sure you ought to take care of yourself," said Miss Hamelyn. "I hope you will not allow Goneril to fatigue you."

"Gonerilla! What a pretty name! Charming! I suppose it is in your family?" asked the old lady.

Miss Hamelyn blushed a little, for her niece's name was a sore point

with her.

"It's an awful name for any Christian woman," said a deep voice at the door. "And pray, who's called Goneril?"

Miss Prunty came forward: a short, thick-set woman of fifty, with fine dark eyes, and, even in a Florentine summer, with something stiff and masculine in the fashion of her dress.

"And have you brought your niece?" she said, as she turned to Miss Hamelyn.

"Yes, she is in the garden."

"Well, I hope she understands that she'll have to rough it here."

"Goneril is a very simple girl," said Miss Hamelyn.

"So it's she that's called Goneril?"

"Yes," said the aunt, making an effort. "Of course I am aware of the strangeness of the name, but--but, in fact, my brother was devotedly attached to his wife, who died at Goneril's birth."

"Whew!" whistled Miss Prunty. "The parson must have been a fool who christened her!"

"He did, in fact, refuse; but my brother would have no baptism saving with that name, which, unfortunately, it is impossible to shorten."

"I think it is a charming name!" said Madame Petrucci, coming to the rescue. "Gonerilla--it dies on one's lips like music! And if you do not like it, Brigida, what's in a name? as your charming Byron said."

"I hope we shall make her happy," said Miss Prunty.

"Of course we shall!" cried the elder lady.

"Goneril is easily made happy," asserted Miss Hamelyn.

"That's a good thing," snapped Miss Prunty, "for there's not much here to make her so!"

"O Brigida! I am sure there are many attractions. The air, the view, the historic association! and, more than all, you know there is always a chance of the signorino!"

"Of whom?" said Miss Hamelyn, rather anxiously.

"Of him!" cried Madame Petrucci, pointing to the engraving opposite. "He lives, of course, in the capital; but he rents the villa behind our house,--the Medici Villa,--and when he is tired of Rome he runs down here for a week or so; and so your Gonerilla may have the benefit of _his_ society!"

"Very nice, I'm sure," said Miss Hamelyn, greatly relieved; for she knew that Signor Graziano must be fifty.

"We have known him," went on the old lady, "very nearly thirty years. He used to largely frequent the salon of our dear, our cherished Madame Lilli."

The tears came into the old lady's eyes. No doubt those days seemed near and dear to her; she did not see the dust on those faded triumphs.

"That's all stale news!" cried Miss Prunty, jumping up. "And Gon'ril (since I'll have to call her so) must be tired of waiting in the garden."

They walked out on to the terrace. The girl was not there, but by the gate into the olive-yard, where there was a lean-to shed for tools, they found her sitting on a cask, whittling a piece of wood and talking to a curly-headed little contadino.

Hearing steps, Goneril turned round. "He was asleep," she said. "Fancy, in such beautiful weather!"

Then, remembering that two of the ladies were still strangers, she made an old-fashioned little courtesy.

"I hope you won't find me a trouble, ladies," she said.

"She is charming!" said Madame Petrucci, throwing up her hands.

Goneril blushed; her hat had slipped back and showed her short brown curls of hair, strong regular features, and flexile scarlet mouth laughing upward like a faun's. She had sweet dark eyes, a little too small and narrow.

"I mean to be very happy," she exclaimed.

"Always mean that, my dear," said Miss Prunty.

"And now, since Gonerilla is no longer a stranger," added Madame Petrucci, "we will leave her to the rustic society of Angiolino while we show Miss Hamelyn our orangery."

"And conclude our business!" said Bridget Prunty.

CHAPTER II

THE SIGNORINO

One day, when Goneril, much browner and rosier for a week among the mountains, came in to lunch at noon, she found no signs of that usually regular repast. The little maid was on her knees polishing the floor; Miss Prunty was scolding, dusting, ordering dinner, arranging vases, all at once; strangest of all, Madame Petrucci had taken the oil-cloth cover from her grand piano, and, seated before it, was practising her sweet and faded notes, unheeding of the surrounding din and business.

"What's the matter?" cried Goneril.

"We expect the signorino," said Miss Prunty.

"And is he going to stay here?"

"Don't be a fool!" snapped that lady; and then she added, "Go into the kitchen and get some of the pasty and some bread and cheese--there's a good girl."

"All right!" said Goneril.

Madame Petrucci stopped her vocalising. "You shall have all the better a dinner to compensate you, my Gonerilla!" She smiled sweetly, and then again became Zerlina.

Goneril cut her lunch, and took it out of doors to share with her companion, Angiolino. He was harvesting the first corn under the olives, but at noon it was too hot to work. Sitting still there was, however, a cool breeze that gently stirred the sharp-edged olive-leaves.

Angiolino lay down at full length and munched his bread and cheese in perfect happiness. Goneril kept shifting about to get herself into the narrow shadow cast by the split and writhen trunk.

"How aggravating it is!" she cried. "In England, where there's no sun, there's plenty of shade; and here, where the sun is like a mustard-plaster on one's back, the leaves are all set edgewise on purpose that they sha'n't cast any shadow!"

Angiolino made no answer to this intelligent remark.

"He is going to sleep again!" cried Goneril, stopping her lunch in despair. "He is going to sleep, and there are no end of things I want to know. Angiolino!"

"_Si_, signora," murmured the boy.

"Tell me about Signor Graziano."

"He is our padrone; he is never here."

"But he is coming to-day. Wake up, wake up, Angiolino. I tell you, he is on the way!"

"Between life and death there are so many combinations," drawled the boy, with Tuscan incredulity and sententiousness.

"Ah!" cried the girl, with a little shiver of impatience. "Is he young?"

"_Che!_"

"Is he old then?"

"_Neppure!_"

"What is he like? He must be _something_."

"He's our padrone," repeated Angiolino, in whose imagination Signor Graziano could occupy no other place.

"How stupid you are!" exclaimed the young English girl.

"Maybe," said Angiolino, stolidly.

"Is he a good padrone? Do you like him?"

"Rather!" The boy smiled and raised himself on one elbow; his eyes twinkled with good-humoured malice.

"My _babbo_ had much better wine than _quel signore_," he said.

"But that is wrong!" cried Goneril, quite shocked.

"Who knows?"

After this conversation flagged. Goneril tried to imagine what a great musician could be like: long hair, of course; her imagination did not get much beyond the hair. He would of course be much older now than his portrait. Then she watched Angiolino cutting the corn, and learned how to tie the swathes together. She was occupied in this useful employment when the noise of wheels made them both stop and look over the wall.

"Here's the padrone!" cried the boy.

"Oh, he is old!" said Goneril. "He is old and brown, like a coffee-bean."

"To be old and good is better than youth with malice," suggested Angiolino, by way of consolation.

"I suppose so," acquiesced Goneril.

Nevertheless she went in to dinner a little disappointed.

The signorino was not in the house; he had gone up to the villa; but he had sent a message that later in the evening he intended to pay his respects to his old friends. Madame Petrucci was beautifully dressed in soft black silk, old lace, and a white Indian shawl. Miss Prunty had on her starchiest collar and most formal tie. Goneril saw it was necessary that she, likewise should deck herself in her best. She was much too young and impressionable not to be influenced by the flutter of excitement and interest which filled the whole of the little cottage. Goneril, too, was excited and anxious, although Signor Graziano had seemed so old and like a coffee-bean. She made no progress in the piece of embroidery she was working as a present for the two old ladies, jumping up and down to look out of the window. When, about eight o'clock, the door-bell rang, Goneril blushed, Madame Petrucci gave a pretty little shriek, Miss Prunty jumped up and rang for coffee. A moment afterward the signorino entered. While he was greeting her hostesses Goneril cast a rapid glance at him. He was tall for an Italian, rather bent and rather gray; fifty at least--therefore very old. He certainly was brown, but his features were fine and good, and he had a distinguished and benevolent air that somehow made her think of an abbe, a French abbe of the last century. She could quite imagine him saying, "_Enfant de St. Louis, montez au ciel!_"

Thus far had she got in her meditations when she felt herself addressed in clear, half-mocking tones:

"And how, this evening, is Madamigella Ruth?"

So he had seen her this evening binding his corn.

"I am quite well, padrone," she said, smiling shyly.

The two old ladies looked on amazed, for of course they were not in the secret.

"Signor Graziano, Miss Goneril Hamelyn," said Miss Prunty, rather severely.

Goneril felt that the time had come for silence and good manners. She

sat quite quiet over her embroidery, listening to the talk of Sontag, of Clementi, of musicians and singers dead and gone. She noticed that the ladies treated Signore Graziano with the utmost reverence, even the positive Miss Prunty furling her opinions in deference to his gayest hint. They talked too of Madame Lilli, and always as if she were still young and fair, as if she had died yesterday, leaving the echo of her triumph loud behind her. And yet all this had happened years before Goneril had ever seen the light.

"Mees Goneril is feeling very young!" said the signorino, suddenly turning his sharp, kind eyes upon her.

"Yes," said Goneril, all confusion.

Madame Petrucci looked almost annoyed--the gay, serene little lady that nothing ever annoyed.

"It is she that is young!" she cried, in answer to an unspoken thought. "She is a baby!"

"Oh, I am seventeen!" said Goneril.

They all laughed, and seemed at ease again.

"Yes, yes; she is very young," said the signorino.

But a little shadow had fallen across their placid entertainment: the spirit had left their memories; they seemed to have grown shapeless, dusty, as the fresh and comely faces of dead Etruscan kings crumble into mould at the touch of the pitiless sunshine.

"Signorino," said Madame Petrucci, presently, "if you will accompany me we will perform one of your charming melodies."

Signor Graziano rose a little stiffly and led the pretty, withered little diva to the piano.

Goneril looked on, wondering, admiring. The signorino's thin white hands made a delicate, fluent melody, reminding her of running water under the rippled shade of trees, and, like a high, sweet bird, the thin, penetrating notes of the singer rose, swelled, and died away, admirably true and just even in this latter weakness. At the end Signor Graziano stopped his playing to give time for an elaborate cadenza. Suddenly Madame Petrucci gasped; a sharp discordant sound cracked the delicate finish of her singing. She put her handkerchief to her mouth.

"Bah!" she said, "this evening I am abominably husky."

The tears rose to Goneril's eyes. Was it so hard to grow old? This doubt

made her voice loudest of all in the chorus of mutual praise and thanks which covered the song's abrupt finale.

And then there came a terrible ordeal. Miss Prunty, anxious to divert the current of her friend's ideas, had suggested that the girl should sing. Signor Graziano and madame insisted; they would take no refusal.

"Sing, sing, little bird!" cried the old lady.

"But, madame, how can one--after you?"

The homage in the young girl's voice made the little diva more good-humouredly insistent than before, and Goneril was too well-bred to make a fuss. She stood by the piano wondering which to choose, the Handels that she always drawled or the Pinsuti that she always galloped. Suddenly she came by an inspiration.

"Madame," she pleaded, "may I sing one of Angiolino's songs?"

"Whatever you like, _cara mia_."

And, standing by the piano, her arms hanging loose, she began a chant such as the peasants use working under the olives. Her voice was small and deep, with a peculiar thick sweetness that suited the song, half humorous, half pathetic. These were the words she sang:

"Vorrei morir di morte piccinina,
Morta la sera e viva la mattina.
Vorrei morire, e non vorrei morire,
Vorrei veder chi mi piange e chi ride;
Vorrei morir, e star sulle finestre,
Vorrei veder chi mi cuce la veste;
Vorrei morir, e stare sulla scala,
Vorrei veder chi mi porta la bara:
Vorrei morir, e vorre' alzar la voce,
Vorrei veder chi mi porta la croce."

"Very well chosen, my dear," said Miss Prunty, when the song was finished.

"And very well sung, my Gonerilla!" cried the old lady.

But the signorino went up to the piano and shook hands with her.

"Little Mees Goneril," he said, "you have the makings of an artist."

The two old ladies stared, for, after all, Goneril's performance had been very simple. You see, they were better versed in music than in human nature.

CHAPTER III

SI VIEILLESSE POUVAIT!

Signor Graziano's usual week of holiday passed and lengthened into almost two months, and still he stayed on at the villa. The two old ladies were highly delighted.

"At last he has taken my advice!" cried Miss Prunty. "I always told him those premature gray hairs came from late hours and Roman air."

Madame Petrucci shook her head and gave a meaning smile. Her friendship with the signorino had begun when he was a lad and she a charming married woman; like many another friendship, it had begun with a flirtation, and perhaps (who knows?) she thought the flirtation had revived.

As for Goneril, she considered him the most charming old man she had ever known, and liked nothing so much as to go out a walk with him. That, indeed, was one of the signorino's pleasures; he loved to take the young girl all over his gardens and vineyards, talking to her in the amiable, half-petting, half-mocking manner that he had adopted from the first; and twice a week he gave her a music lesson.

"She has a splendid organ!" he would say.

"_Vous croyez_?" fluted Madame Petrucci, with the vilest accent and the most aggravating smile imaginable.

It was the one hobby of the signorino's that she regarded with disrespect.

Goneril too was a little bored by the music lesson, but, on the other hand, the walks delighted her.

One day Goneril was out with her friend.

"Are the peasants very much afraid of you, signore?" she asked.

"Am I such a tyrant?" counter-questioned the signorino.

"No; but they are always begging me to ask you things. Angiolino wants to know if he may go for three days to see his uncle at Fiesole."

"Of course."

"But why, then, don't they ask you themselves? Is it they think me so

cheeky?"

"Perhaps they think I can refuse you nothing."

"_Che!_ In that case they would ask Madame Petrucci."

Goneril ran on to pick some China roses. The signorino stopped confounded.

"It is impossible!" he cried. "She cannot think I am in love with Giulia! She cannot think I am so old as that!"

The idea seemed horrible to him. He walked on very quickly till he came up to Goneril, who was busy plucking roses in a hedge.

"For whom are those flowers?" he asked.

"Some are for you and some are for Madame Petrucci."

"She is a charming woman, Madame Petrucci."

"A dear old lady," murmured Goneril, much more interested in her posy.

"Old, do you call her?" said the signorino, rather anxiously. "I should scarcely call her that, though of course she is a good deal older than either of us."

"Either of us!" Goneril looked up astounded. Could the signorino have suddenly gone mad?

He blushed a little under his brown skin that had reminded her of a coffee-bean.

"She is a good ten years older than I am," he explained.

"Ah, well, ten years isn't much."

"You don't think so?" he cried, delighted. Who knows? she might not think even thirty too much.

"Not at that age," said Goneril, blandly.

Signor Graziano could think of no reply.

But from that day one might have dated a certain assumption of youthfulness in his manners. At cards it was always the signorino and Goneril against the two elder ladies; in his conversation, too, it was to the young girl that he constantly appealed, as if she were his natural companion--she, and not his friends of thirty years. Madame

Petrucci, always serene and kind, took no notice of these little changes, but they were particularly irritating to Miss Prunty, who was, after all, only four years older than the signorino.

That lady had, indeed, become more than usually sharp and foreboding. She received the signorino's gay effusions in ominous silence, and would frown darkly while Madame Petrucci petted her "little bird," as she called Goneril. Once, indeed, Miss Prunty was heard to remark that it was tempting Providence to have dealings with a creature whose very name was a synonym for ingratitude. But the elder lady only smiled and declared that her Gonerilla was charming, delicious, a real sunshine in the house.

"Now I call on you to support me, signorino," she cried one evening, when the three elders sat together in the room, while Goneril watered the roses on the terrace. "Is not my Gonerilla a charming little _bebe_?"

Signor Graziano withdrew his eyes from the window.

"Most charming, certainly, but scarcely such a child. She is seventeen, you know, my dear signora."

"Seventeen! _Santo Dio!_ And what is one at seventeen but an innocent, playful, charming little kitten?"

"You are always right, madame," agreed the signorino, but he looked as if he thought she were very wrong.

"Of course I am right," laughed the little lady. "Come here, my Gonerilla, and hold my skein for me. Signor Graziano is going to charm us with one of his delightful airs."

"I hoped she would sing," faltered the signorino.

"Who? Gonerilla? Nonsense, my friend. She winds silk much better than she sings."

Goneril laughed; she was not at all offended. But Signor Graziano made several mistakes in his playing. At last he left the piano. "I cannot play to-night," he cried. "I am not in the humour. Goneril, will you come and walk with me on the terrace?"

Before the girl could reply Miss Prunty had darted an angry glance at Signor Graziano.

"Good Lord, what fools men are!" she ejaculated. "And do you think, now, I'm going to let that girl, who's just getting rid of her malaria, go star-gazing with any old idiot while all the mists are curling out of

the valleys?"

"Brigida, my love, you forget yourself," said Madame Petrucci.

"Bah!" cried the signorino. He was evidently out of temper.

The little lady hastened to smooth the troubled waters. "Talking of malaria," she began, in her serenest manner, "I always remember what my dearest Madame Lilli told me. It was at one of Prince Teano's concerts. You remember, signorino?"

"_Che!_ How should I remember?" he exclaimed. "It was a lifetime ago, dead and forgotten."

The old lady shrank, as if a glass of water had been rudely thrown in her face. She said nothing, staring blindly.

"Go to bed, Goneril!" cried Miss Prunty, in a voice of thunder.

CHAPTER IV

BIRDS OF A FEATHER

A few mornings after these events the postman brought a letter for Goneril. This was such a rare occurrence that she blushed rose red at the very sight of it and had to walk up and down the terrace several times before she felt calm enough to read it. Then she went upstairs and knocked at the door of Madame Petrucci's room.

"Come in, little bird."

The old lady, in pink merino and curl-papers, opened the door. Goneril held up her letter.

"My cousin Jack is coming to Florence, and he is going to walk over to see me this afternoon. And may he stay to dinner, _cara_ signora?"

"Why, of course, Gonerilla. I am charmed!"

Goneril kissed the old lady, and danced downstairs brimming over with delight.

Later in the morning Signor Graziano called.

"Will you come out with me, Mees Goneril?" he said. "On my land the earliest vintage begins to-day."

"Oh, how nice!" she cried.

"Come, then," said the signorino, smiling.

"Oh, I can't come to-day, because of Jack."

"Jack?"

"My cousin; he may come at any time."

"Your cousin!" The signorino frowned a little. "Ah, you English," he said, "you consider all your cousins brothers and sisters!"

Goneril laughed.

"Is it not so?" he asked, a little anxiously.

"Jack is much nicer than my brothers," said the young girl.

"And who is he, this Jack?"

"He's a dear boy," said Goneril, "and very clever; he is going home for the Indian civil-service exam; he has been out to Calcutta to see my father."

The signorino did not pay any attention to the latter part of this description, but he appeared to find the beginning very satisfactory.

"So he is only a boy," he muttered to himself, and went away comparatively satisfied.

Goneril spent most of the day watching the road from Florence. She might not walk on the highway, but a steep short cut that joined the main road at the bottom of the hill was quite at her disposal. She walked up and down for more than an hour. At last she saw some one on the Florence road. She walked on quickly. It was the telegraph-boy.

She tore open the envelope and read: "Venice.--Exam. on Wednesday. Start at once. _Arivederci_."

It was with very red eyes that Goneril went in to dinner.

"So the cousin hasn't come?" said Miss Prunty, kindly.

"No; he had to go home at once for his examination."

"I dare say he'll come over again soon, my dear," said that discriminating lady. She had quite taken Goneril back into her good graces.

They all sat together in the little parlor after dinner. At eight o'clock the door-bell rang. It was now seven weeks since Goneril had blushed with excitement when first she heard that ring, and now she did not blush.

The signorino entered. He walked very straight and his lips were set. He came in with the air of one prepared to encounter opposition.

"Mees Goneril," he said, "will you come out on the terrace?--before it is too late," he added, with a savage glance at Miss Prunty.

"Yes," said Goneril; and they went out together.

"So the cousin did not come?" said the signorino.

"No."

They went on a little way in silence together. The night was moon-lit and clear; not a wind stirred the leaves; the sky was like a sapphire, containing but not shedding light. The late oleanders smelled very sweet; the moon was so full that one could distinguish the peculiar grayish-pink of the blossoms.

"It is a lovely night!" said Goneril.

"And a lovely place."

"Yes."

Then a bird sang.

"You have been here just eight weeks," said the signorino.

"I have been very happy."

He did not speak for a minute or two, and then he said:

"Would you like to live here always?"

"Ah, yes! but that is impossible."

He took her hand and turned her gently, so that her face was in the light.

"Dear Mees Goneril, why is it impossible?"

For a moment the young girl did not answer. She blushed very red, and looked brave.

"Because of Jack!" she said.

"Ah!"

"Nothing is settled," added the young girl, "but it is no use pretending not to know."

"It is no use," he repeated, very sadly.

And then for a little while they listened to the bird.

"Mees Goneril," said the signorino at last, "do you know why I brought you out here?"

"Not at all," she answered.

It was a minute before he spoke again.

"I am going to Rome to-morrow," he said, "and I wanted to bid you good-bye. You will sing to me to-night, as it will be the last time?"

"Oh, I hope not the last time!"

"Yes, yes," he said, a little testily; "unless--and I pray it may not be so--unless you ever need the help of an old friend."

"Dear Signor Graziano!"

"And now you will sing me my 'Nobil Amore'?"

"I will do anything you like."

The signorino sighed and looked at her for a minute. Then he led her into the little parlour, where Madame Petrucci was singing shrilly in the twilight.

00

LES EFFARÉS

by Arthur Rimbaud

from Poésies complètes

Noirs dans la neige et dans la brume,
Au grand soupirail qui s'allume,
Leurs culs en rond,

À genoux, cinq petits,--misère!--
Regardent le boulanger faire
Le lourd pain blond...

Ils voient le fort bras blanc qui tourne
La pâte grise, et qui l'enfourne
Dans un trou clair.

Ils écoutent le bon pain cuire
Le boulanger au gras sourire
Chante un vieil air.

Ils sont blottis, pas un ne bouge,
Au souffle du soupirail rouge,
Chaud comme un sein.

Et quand, pendant que minuit sonne,
Façonné, pétillant et jaune,
On sort le pain;

Quand, sous les poutres enfumées,
Changent les croûtes parfumées,
Et les grillons;

Que ce trou chaud souffle la vie;
Ils ont leur âme si ravie
Sous leurs haillons,

Ils se ressentent si bien vivre,
Les pauvres petits pleins de givre!
--Qu'ils sont là, tous,

Collant leurs petits museaux roses
Au grillage, chantant des choses,
Entre les trous,

Mais bien bas,--comme une prière...
Repliés vers cette lumière
Du ciel rouvert,

--Si fort, qu'ils crèvent leur culotte,
--Et que leur linge blanc tremblotte
Au vent d'hiver...

20 septembre 1870.

The Next Corner

by Guy Wetmore Carryl

from Zut and Other Parisians

ANTHONY CAZEBY was a man whom the felicitous combination of an adventurous disposition, sufficient ready money, and a magnificent constitution had introduced to many and various sensations, but he was conscious that, so far as intensity went, no one of them all had approached for a moment that with which he emerged from the doorway of the Automobile Club, and, winking at the sting of the keen winter air, looked out across the place de la Concorde, with its globes of light, swung, like huge pearls on invisible strings, across the haze of the January midnight. He paused for a moment, as if he would allow his faculties to obtain a full and final grasp of his situation, and motioned aside the trim little club chasseur who stood before him, with one cotton-gloved hand stretched out expectantly for a supposititious carriage-check.

"Va, mon petit, je vais à pied!"

Afoot! Cazeby smiled to himself at the tone of sudden caprice which rang in his voice, and, turning his fur collar high up about his ears, swung off rapidly toward the Cours la Reine. After all, the avenue d'Eylau was only an agreeable stroll's length distant. Why not go home afoot? But then, on the other hand, why go home at all? As this thought leaped suddenly at Cazeby's throat out of the void of the great unpremeditated, he caught his breath, stopped suddenly in the middle of the driveway, and then went on more slowly, thinking hard.

It had been that _rarissima avis_ of social life, even in Paris, a perfect dinner. Cazeby had found himself wondering, at more than one stage of its smooth and imposing progress, how the Flints could afford to do it. But on each recurrence of the thought he dismissed it with a little frown of vexation. If there was one thing more than another upon which Cazeby prided himself, it was originality of thought, word, and deed, and he was annoyed to find himself, even momentarily, on a mental level with the gossips of the American and English colonies, whose time is equally divided between wondering how the Choses can afford to do what they do, and why the Machins cannot afford to do what they leave undone.

People had said many things of Hartley Flint, and still more of his wife, but no one had ever had the ignorance or the perversity to accuse them of inefficiency in the matter of a dinner. Moreover, on this particular occasion, they were returning the hospitality of the Baroness Klemfft, who had, at the close of the Exposition, impressed into her service the chef of the Roumanian restaurant, and whose dinners were, in consequence, the wonder and despair of four foreign colonies. After her

latest exploit Hartley Flint had remarked to his wife that it was "up to them to make good," which, being interpreted, was to say that it was at once his duty and his intention to repay the Baroness in her own sterling coin. The fact that the men of the party afterwards commended Hartley's choice of wines, and that the women expressed the opinion that "Kate Flint looked really pretty!" would seem to be proof positive that the operation of "making good" had been an unqualified success.

Now, Cazeby was wondering whether he had actually enjoyed it all. Under the circumstances it seemed to him incredible, and yet he could not recall a qualm of uneasiness from the moment when the maître d'hôtel had thrown open the doors of the private dining room, until the Baroness had smiled at her hostess out of a cloud of old Valenciennes, and said, "Now there are two of us who give impeccable dinners, Madame Flint." Even now, even facing his last ditch, Cazeby was conscious of a little thrill of self-satisfaction. He had said the score of clever things which each of his many hostesses expected of him, and had told with great effect his story of the little German florist, which had grown, that season, under the persuasive encouragement of society's applause, from a brief anecdote into a veritable achievement of Teutonic dialect. Also, he had worn a forty franc orchid, and had left it in his coffee-cup because it had begun to wilt. In brief, he had been Anthony Cazeby at his extraordinary best, a mixture of brilliancy and eccentricity, without which, as Mrs. Flint was wont to say, no dinner was complete.

But the sublime and the ridiculous are not the only contrasting conditions that lie no further than a step apart, and Cazeby was painfully conscious of having, in the past five minutes, crossed the short interval which divides gay from grave. Reduced to its lowest terms, his situation lay in his words to the little chasseur. With the odor of the rarest orchid to be found in Vaillant-Rozeau's whole establishment yet clinging to his lapel, Anthony Cazeby was going home on foot because the fare from the Concorde to the avenue d'Eylau was one franc fifty, and one franc fifty precisely ninety centimes more than he possessed in the world. For a moment he straightened himself, threw back his head, and looked up at the dull saffron of the low-hanging sky, in an attempt to realize this astounding fact, and then went back to his thinking.

Well, it was not surprising. The life of a popular young diplomat with extravagant tastes is not conducive to economy, and the forty thousand dollars which had come to Cazeby at the beginning of his twenty-eighth year had proved but a bad second best in the struggle with Parisian gayety. His bibelots, his servants, Auteuil, Longchamp, his baccarat at the Prince de Tréville's, a dancer at the Folies-Marigny, Monte Carlo, Aix, Trouville,--they had all had their share, and now the piper was waiting to be paid and the exchequer was empty. It was an old story. Other men of his acquaintance had done the same, but they had had some final resource. The trouble was, as Cazeby had already noted, that, in

his case, the final resource was not, as in theirs, pecuniary. Quite on the contrary, it was a tidy little weapon, of Smith and Wesson make, which lay in the upper right hand drawer of his marqueterie desk. He had looked long at it that same afternoon, with all his worldly wealth, in the shape of forty-two francs sixty, spread out beside it. That was before he had taken a fiacre to Vaillant-Rozeau's.

At the very moment when Cazeby was contemplating these doubtful assets, a grim old gentleman was seated at another desk, three thousand miles away, engaged upon a calculation of the monthly profits derived from a wholesale leather business. But Cazeby père was one of the hopeless persons who believe in economy. He was of the perverted opinion that money hardly come by should be thoughtfully spent, or, preferably, invested in government bonds, and he had violent prejudices against "industrials," games of chance, and young men who preferred the gayety of a foreign capital to the atmosphere of "the Swamp." Also he was very rich. But Anthony had long since ceased to regard his father as anything more than a chance relation. He could have told what would be the result of a frank confession of his extremity as accurately as if the avowal had been already made. There would have been some brief reference to the sowing of oats and their reaping, to the making of a metaphorical bed and the inevitable occupancy thereof, and to other proverbial illustrations which, in a financial sense, are more ornamental than useful,--and nothing more. The essential spark of sympathy had been lacking between these two since the moment when the most eminent physician in New York had said, "It is a boy, sir,--but--we cannot hope to save the mother." The fault may have lain on the one side, or the other, or on both, or on neither; but certain it is that to Anthony's imagination Cazeby senior had never appealed in the light of a final resource.

Somehow, in none of his calculations had the idea of invoking assistance ever played a part. Naturally, as a reasoning being, he had foreseen the present crisis for some months, but at the time when the inevitable catastrophe first became clear to him it was already too late to regain his balance, since the remainder of his inheritance was so pitifully small that any idea of retrieving his fortunes through its instrumentality was simply farcical. The swirl of the rapids, as he had then told himself, had already caught his boat. All that was left to do was to go straight on to the sheer of the fall, with his pennant flying and himself singing at the helm. Then, on the brink, a well-placed bullet--no bungling for Anthony Cazeby!--and the next day people would be talking of the shocking accident which had killed him in the act of cleaning his revolver, and saying the usual things about a young man with a brilliant future before him and everything in life for which to live.

And this plan he had carried out in every detail--save the last, to which he was now come; and his was the satisfying conviction that not

one of the brilliant, careless men and women, among whom he lived, and moved, and had his being, suspected for a moment that the actual circumstances differed in the least from the outward appearances. He thought it all over carefully now, and there was no play in the entire game that he felt he would have liked to have changed.

Sentiment had no part in the makeup of Anthony Cazeby. Lacking from early childhood the common ties of home affection, and by training and profession a diplomat, he added to a naturally undemonstrative nature the non-committal suavity of official poise. But that was not all. He had never been known to be ill at ease. This was something which gained him a reputation for studious self-control. As a matter of fact it was due to nothing of the sort. No one had ever come fairly at the root of his character except Cazeby père, who once said, in a fit of passion, "You don't care a brass cent, sir, whether you live and are made President of the United States, or die and are eternally damned!" And that was exactly the point.

Something of all this had passed through Cazeby's mind, when he was suddenly aroused to an appreciation of his whereabouts by the sound of a voice, to find that the curious instinct of direction which underlies advanced inebriety and profound preoccupation alike, had led him up the avenue du Trocadéro, and across the place, and that he had already advanced some little way along the avenue d'Eylau in the direction of his apartment. The street was dimly lighted, but, just behind him, the windows of a tiny wine-shop gave out a subdued glow, and from within came the sound of a violin. Then Cazeby's attention came around to the owner of the voice. This was a youngish man of medium stature, in the familiar street dress of a French laborer, jacket and waistcoat of dull blue velveteen, peg-top trousers of heavy corduroy, a crimson knot at his throat, and a dark tam o'shanter pulled low over one ear. As their eyes met, he apparently saw that Cazeby had not heard his first remark, and so repeated it.

"I have need of a drink!"

There was nothing of the beggar in his tone or manner. Both were threatening, rather; and, as soon as he had spoken, he thrust his lower jaw forward, in the fashion common to the thug of any and every nationality when the next move is like to be a blow. But, for once, these manifestations of hostility failed signally of effect. Cazeby was the last person in the world to select as the object of sudden attack, with the idea that panic would make him easy prey. In his present state of mind he went further than preserving his equanimity: he was even faintly amused. It was not that he did not comprehend the other's purpose, but, to his way of thinking, there was something distinctly humorous in the idea of holding up a man with only sixty centimes to his name, and menacing him with injury, when he himself was on his way to the upper right hand drawer of the marqueterie desk.

"I have need of a drink," repeated the other, coming a step nearer.
"Thou art not deaf, at least?"

"No," said Cazeby, pleasantly, "no, I am not deaf, and I, too, have need of a drink. Shall we take it together?" And, without waiting for a reply, he turned and stepped through the doorway of the little wineshop. The Frenchman hesitated, shrugged his shoulders with an air of complete bewilderment, and, after an instant also entered the shop and placed himself at the small table where Cazeby was already seated.

"A vitriol for me," he said.

Cazeby had not passed three years in Paris for nothing. He received this remarkable request with the unconcern of one to whom the slang of the exterior boulevards is sufficiently familiar, and, as the proprietor leaned across the nickled slab of his narrow counter with an air of interrogation, duplicated his companion's order.

"Deux vitriols!"

The proprietor, vouchsafing the phrase a grin of appreciation, lumbered heavily around to the table, filled two small glasses from a bottle of cheap cognac, and stood awaiting payment, hands on hips.

"Di-ze sous," he said.

There was no need to search for the exact amount. Cazeby spun his fifty-centime piece upon the marble, added his remaining two sous by way of pourboire, and disposed of the brandy at a gulp.

"Have you also need of a cigarette?" he inquired, politely, tendering the other his case.

For some minutes, as they smoked, the diplomat and the vagabond took stock of each other in silence. In many ways they were singularly alike. There was in both the same irony of lip line, the same fair chiseling of chin and nostril and brow, the same weariness of eye. The difference was one of dress and bearing alone, and, in those first moments of mutual analysis, Cazeby realized that there was about this street-lounger a vague air of the gentleman, a subtle suggestion of good birth and breeding, which even his slouching manner and coarse speech were not wholly able to conceal: and his guest was conscious that in Cazeby he had to deal with no mere society puppet, but with one in whom the limitations of position had never wholly subdued the devil-may-care instincts of the vagabond. The one was a finished model of a man of the world, the other a caricature, but the clay was the same.

"I am also hungry," said the latter suddenly.

"In that respect," responded Cazeby, in the same tone of even politeness, "I am, unfortunately, unable to assist you, unless you will accept the hospitality of my apartment. It is but a step, and I am rather an expert on bacon and eggs. Also," he added, falling into the idiom of the faubourgs, "there is a means there of remedying the dryness of the sponge in one's throat. My name is Antoine."

"I am Bibi-la-Raie," said the other shortly. Then he continued, with instinctive suspicion, "It is a strange fashion thou hast of introducing a type to these gentlemen."

"As a matter of fact," said Cazeby, "I do not live over a poste. But whether or not you will come is something for you to decide. It is less trouble to cook eggs for one than for two."

Bibi-la-Raie reflected briefly. Finally he had recourse to his characteristic shrug.

"After all, what difference?" he said. "As well now as another time. I follow thee!"

The strangely assorted companions entered Cazeby's apartment as the clock was striking one, and pressure of an electric button, flooding the salon with light, revealed a little tea-table furnished with cigarettes and cigars, decanters of Scotch whiskey and liqueurs, and Venetian goblets of oddly tinted glass. Cazeby shot a swift glance at his guest as this array sprang into view, and was curiously content to observe that he manifested no surprise. Bibi-la-Raie had flung himself into a great leather chair with an air of being entirely at ease.

"Not bad, thy little box," he observed. "Is it permitted?"

He indicated the table with a nod.

"Assuredly," said Cazeby. "Do as if you were at home. I shall be but a moment with the supper."

When he returned from the kitchen, bearing a smoking dish of bacon and eggs, butter, rye bread, and Swiss cheese, Bibi-la-Raie was standing in rapt contemplation before an etching of the "Last Judgment."

"What a genius, this animal of a Michel Ange!" he said.

"Rather deft at times," replied Cazeby, arranging the dishes on the larger table.

"Je te crois!" said Bibi, enthusiastically. "Without him--what? Evidently, it was not Léon Treize who built Saint Pierre!"

The eggs had been peculiarly obstinate, as it happened, and a growing irritability had taken possession of Anthony. As they ate in silence, the full force of his tragic position returned to him. Even the unwontedness of his chance encounter with Bibi-la-Raie had not wholly dispelled the cloud that had been gradually settling around him since he emerged from the Automobile Club, and, as they finished the little repast, he turned suddenly upon his guest, in a burst of irritation.

"Who are you?" he said. "And what does all this mean? Was I mistaken, when you first spoke to me, in thinking you a mere voyou? Surely not! You meant to rob me. You speak the argot of the fortifications. Yet here I find you discoursing on Michel Angelo as though you were the conservateur of the Uffizzi! What am I to think?"

Bibi-la-Raie lit another cigarette, blew forth the smoke in a thin, gray wisp, and thrust his thumbs into the arm-holes of his velveteen waistcoat.

"And you," he said, slowly, abandoning the familiar address he had been using, "who are you? No, you were not mistaken in thinking I meant to rob you. Such is my profession. But does a gentleman reply, in ordinary, to the summons of a thief by paying that thief a drink? Does he invite him to his apartment and cook a supper for him? What am I to think?"

There was a brief pause, and then he faced his host squarely.

"Are you absolutely resolved to put an end to it all to-night?" he demanded.

Cazeby made a small sign of bewilderment.

"Ah, mon vieux," continued the other. "That, you know, is of no use with me. You ask me who I am. For one thing, I am one who has lived too long in touch with desperate men not to know the look in the eyes when the end has come. You think you are going to blow out your brains to-night."

"Your wits are wandering; that's all," said Cazeby, compassionately.

"Oh, far from it!" said Bibi-la-Raie, with a short laugh. "But one does not fondle one's revolver in the daytime without a good reason, nor does one leave it on top of letters postmarked this morning unless one has been fondling it--quoi?"

Cazeby was at the marqueterie desk in two strides, tugging at the upper right hand drawer. It was locked. He turned about slowly, and, half seating himself on the edge of the desk, surveyed his guest coolly.

"The revolver is in your pocket," he said.

"No," answered Bibi, with an air of cheerfulness. "I have one of my own. But the key is."

"Why?" said Cazeby.

Bibi helped himself to yellow chartreuse, and appeared to reflect.

"I am not sure that I know why, myself," he said finally. "Perhaps, because you have done me a kindness and I would not like to have you burn your fingers in a moment of absent-mindedness. Perhaps, because we might disagree, and I should not care to take the chance of your shooting first!"

He squinted at the liqueur, swallowed it slowly and with extreme appreciation, smacked his lips, and then, cocking his feet up on Cazeby's brass club fender, began to smoke again, staring into the dwindling fire. His host watched him in silence, until he should be ready to speak, which he presently began to do, with his cigarette drooping from the corner of his mouth and moving in time to his words. He had suddenly and curiously become a man of the world--of the grand monde--and his speech had shaken off all trace of slang, and was tinged instead with the faint club sarcasm which one hears in the glass card-room of the Volney or over coffee on the roof of the Automobile. Moreover, it was beautiful French. Not Mounet himself could have done better.

"The only man to whom one should confide personal secrets," said Bibi-la-Raie, "is he whom one has never seen before and will, as is probable, never see again. I could tell you many things, Monsieur Cazeby, since that is your name,--I have seen your morning's mail, you know!--but, for the moment, let it suffice to say that the voyou who accosted you this evening is of birth as good as yours--pardon, but probably better! _Wein, weib, und gesang_--you know the saying. Add cards and the race-course, and you have, complete, the short ladder of five rungs down which I have been successful in climbing. I shall presume to the extent of supposing that you have just accomplished the same descent. One learns much thereby, but more after one has reached the ground. In many ways I am afraid experience has made me cynical, but in one it has taught me optimism. I have found, and I think I shall continue to find, that there is always something worth looking into around the next corner of even the darkest street. The rue des Sablons, for instance. It was very dark to-night, very damp, and very cold. Assuredly, as I turned into the avenue d'Eylau I had no reason to foresee a supper, Russian cigarettes, and chartreuse jaune. And yet, me voilà! Now what most of us lack--what you, in particular, seem to lack, Monsieur Cazeby--is the tenacity needful if one is to get to that next turning."

"There are streets darker than the rue des Sablons," put in Anthony, falling in with the other's whimsical humor, "and that have no turning."

"You speak from conjecture, not experience," said Bibi-la-Raie. "You can never have seen one."

He glanced about the room, with the air of one making a mental inventory.

"First," he added, "there come the pawnshop, the exterior boulevards, the somewhat insufficient shelter of the Pont Royal. No, you have not come to the last corner."

"All that," said Cazeby, "is simply a matter of philosophy. Each of us has his own idea of what makes life worth the while. When that is no longer procurable, then that is the last corner."

"For instance--?"

"For instance, my own case. You have analyzed my situation sufficiently well--though when you said I was about to blow out my brains"--

"It was a mere guess," interrupted Bibi, "founded on circumstantial evidence. Then I thought so. Now I know it."

"Let us grant you are right," continued Cazeby, with a smile. "I have my own conception of what I require to make existence tolerable. It includes this apartment, or its equivalent, a horse, two servants, two clubs, and a sufficient income to dress, eat, entertain, and amuse myself in the manner of my class,--an extravagant and unreasonable standard, if you will, but such is my conviction. Now, granted that the moment has come when it is no longer possible for me to have these things, and when there is no prospect of my situation being bettered, I cannot conceive what advantage there can be in continuing to live."

"I perceive you are a philosopher," said the other. "How about the religious view?"

Cazeby shrugged his shoulders.

"As to that," he said, "my religious views are, so far as I know, stored away in the little church which I was forced to attend three times on every Sunday of my boyhood. They did not come out with me on the last occasion, and I have never met them since."

"Excellent!" said Bibi. "It is the same with me. But I think you are mistaken in your conviction of what makes life worth living. I had my own delusions in the time. But I have had a deal of schooling since

then. There are many things as amusing as luxury--even on the exterior boulevards. Of course, actual experience is essential. One never knows what one would do under given conditions."

He turned suddenly, and looked Cazeby in the eye.

"What, for example, would you do if you were in my place?" he asked.

"As you say, one never knows," said his host. "I think that, in your place, I should improve the opportunity you find open, and carry out your late and laudable intention of robbing Monsieur Antoine Cazeby. I may be influenced by my knowledge that such a proceeding would not irritate or incommode him in the least, but that is what I think I should do.

"I shall not need these things to-morrow," he added, indicating his surroundings with a gesture. "You were quite right about the pistol. As to your prospective booty, I regret to say that I spent my last sixty centimes on our cognac, but there is a remarkably fine scarf-pin on the table in my dressing-room."

"A sapphire, surrounded by black pearls," put in the other. "You were rather long in cooking those eggs."

"A sapphire, surrounded by black pearls," agreed Cazeby. "Yes, upon reflection, I am quite sure that that is what I should do."

Bibi-la-Raie smiled pleasantly.

"I am glad to find we are of one mind," he said. "Of course, mine was made up, but it is more agreeable to know that I am causing you no inconvenience. I suppose it is unnecessary to add that resistance will be quite useless. I have the only available revolver, and, moreover, I propose to tie you into this extremely comfortable chair. It is not," he added, "that I do not trust you, although our acquaintance is, unfortunately, too recent to inspire complete confidence. No, I have my convictions as well as you, Monsieur Cazeby, and one of them, curiously enough, is that, in spite of appearances, I am doing you a kindness in putting it out of your power, for tonight, at least, to do yourself an injury. Who knows? Perhaps, in the morning, you may find that there is something around the next corner, after all. If not, there is no harm done. Your servants come in early?"

"At seven o'clock," said Anthony, briefly.

"Exactly. And I will leave the key in the drawer."

Bibi was expeditious. When he had bound Cazeby firmly, and with an art that showed practice, he disappeared into the dressing-room, returning

in less than a minute with the sapphire scarf-pin and several other articles of jewelry in his hand.

"I should like to add to these," he said, going to the book-case, "this little copy of Omar Khayyám. He is a favorite of mine. There is something about his philosophy which seems to accord with our own. But--'the bird of time has but a little way to flutter'"--He paused at the door.

"Can I do anything for you before I go?" he inquired politely.

"Be good enough to turn off the light," said the other. "The button is on the right of the door."

"Good-night," said Bibi-la-Raie.

"Good-night,--brother!" said Cazeby.

Then he heard the door of the apartment close softly.

Anthony was awakened from a restless sleep by the sound of its opening. Through the gap between the window draperies the gray light of the winter morning was creeping in. His wrists and ankles were aching from the pressure of the curtain cords with which he had been bound, and he was gratified when, after a brief interval, the salon door was opened in its turn and the invaluable Jules came in, in shirt-sleeves and long white apron, carrying a handful of letters.

That impassive person was probably never nearer to being visibly surprised. For a breath he stopped, and the pupils of his round eyes dilated like those of a cat in a dim light. But his training stood him in good stead, and when he spoke his voice was as innocent of emotion as if he had been announcing dinner.

"Monsieur desires to be untied?"

Left to himself, Cazeby turned his attention to his letters, and from the top of the pile picked up a cablegram. He was still reflecting upon the singular experience of the night, in an attempt to analyze his present emotions. Was he in any whit changed by his enforced reprieve? He was glad to think not. Above all minor faults he abhorred vacillation of purpose. No, his situation and his purpose remained unaltered. But he was conscious, nevertheless, of an unwonted thrill at the thought that, but for the merest chance, it would have been for others to open the envelope he was even now fingering. Jules would already have found him--he wondered, with the shadow of a smile, whether Jules would still have been unsurprised!--and would have brought up the concierge and the police--

Suddenly the cable message jumped at him through his revery as if, at that moment, the words had been instantaneously printed on what was before blank paper, and he realized that it was from his father's solicitor.

Mr. Cazeby died eight o'clock this evening after making will your favor whole property. Waiting instructions.

MILLIKEN.

Anthony straightened himself with a long sigh, and, putting aside the curtain, looked out across the mansardes, wet and gleaming under a thin rain. His hand trembled a little on the heavy velvet, and he frowned at it, and, going across to the table, poured himself out a swallow of brandy.

With the glass at his lips he paused, his eyes upon the chair where Bibi-la-Raie had sat and wherein he himself had passed five hours. Then, very ceremoniously, he bowed and dipped his glass toward an imaginary occupant.

"Merci, monsieur!" he said.

Le Balcon

by Charles Baudelaire
from Les Fleurs du Mal,

LE BALCON

Mère des souvenirs, maîtresse des maîtresses,
O toi, tous mes plaisirs, ô toi, tous mes devoirs!
Tu te rappelleras la beauté des caresses,
La douceur du foyer et le charme des soirs,
Mère des souvenirs, maîtresse des maîtresses!

Les soirs illuminés par l'ardeur du charbon,
Et les soirs au balcon, voilés de vapeurs roses;
Que ton sein m'était doux! que ton coeur m'était bon!
Nous avons dit souvent d'impérissables choses
Les soirs illuminés par l'ardeur du charbon.

Que les soleils sont beaux dans les chaudes soirées!
Que l'espace est profond! que le coeur est puissant!
En me penchant vers toi, reine des adorées,
Je croyais respirer le parfum de ton sang.
Que les soleils sont beaux dans les chaudes soirées!

La nuit s'épaississait ainsi qu'une cloison,
Et mes yeux dans le noir devinaient tes prunelles
Et je buvais ton souffle, ô douceur, ô poison!
Et tes pieds s'endormaient dans mes mains fraternelles,
La nuit s'épaississait ainsi qu'une cloison.

Je sais l'art d'évoquer les minutes heureuses,
Et revis mon passé blotti dans tes genoux.
Car à quoi bon chercher tes beautés langoureuses
Ailleurs qu'en ton cher corps et qu'en ton coeur si doux?
Je sais l'art d'évoquer les minutes heureuses!

Ces serments, ces parfums, ces baisers infinis,
Renaîtront-ils d'un gouffre interdit à nos sondes,
Comme montent au ciel les soleils rajeunis
Après s'être lacés au fond des mers profondes!
--O serments! ô parfums! ô baisers infinis!

The Balcony

Translator: Cyril Scott

Oh, Mother of Memories! Mistress of Mistresses!
Oh, thou all my pleasures, oh, thou all my prayers!
Can'st thou remember those luscious caresses,
The charm of the hearth and the sweet evening airs?
Oh, Mother, of Memories, Mistress of Mistresses!

Those evenings illumed by the glow of the coal,
And those roseate nights with their vaporous wings,
How calm was thy breast and how good was thy soul,
'Twas then we uttered imperishable things,
Those evenings illumed by the glow of the coal.

How lovely the suns on those hot, autumn nights!
How vast were the heavens! and the heart how hale!
As I leaned towards you--oh, my Queen of Delights,
The scent of thy blood I seemed to inhale.
How lovely the sun on those hot, autumn nights!

The shadows of night-time grew dense like a pall,
And deep through the darkness thine eyes I divined,
And I drank of thy breath--oh sweetness, oh gall,
And thy feet in my brotherly hands reclined,
The shadows of Night-time grew dense like a pall.

I know how to call forth those moments so dear,
And to live my Past--laid on thy knees--once more,
For where should I seek for thy beauties but here
In thy langorous heart and thy body so pure?
I know how to call forth those moments so dear.

Those perfumes, those infinite kisses and sighs,
Are they born in some gulf to our plummetts denied?
Like rejuvenate suns that mount up to the skies,
That first have been cleansed in the depths of the tide;
Oh, perfumes! oh, infinite kisses and sighs!

1845.

EULALIE

I DWELT alone
In a world of moan,
And my soul was a stagnant tide,
Till the fair and gentle Eulalie became my blushing bride--
Till the yellow-haired young Eulalie became my smiling bride.

Ah, less--less bright
The stars of the night
Than the eyes of the radiant girl!
And never a flake
That the vapour can make
With the moon-tints of purple and pearl,
Can vie with the modest Eulalie's most unregarded curl--
Can compare with the bright-eyed Eulalie's most humble and careless curl.

Now Doubt--now Pain
Come never again,
For her soul gives me sigh for sigh,
And all day long
Shines, bright and strong,
Astarté within the sky,
While ever to her dear Eulalie upturns her matron eye--
While ever to her young Eulalie upturns her violet eye.

1845.

000

EL SOLITARIO

by Horacio Quiroga

from Cuentos de Amor de Locura y de Muerte

1917

Kassim era un hombre enfermizo, joyero de profesión, bien que no tuviera tienda establecida. Trabajaba para las grandes casas, siendo su especialidad el montaje de las piedras preciosas. Pocas manos como las suyas para los engarces delicados. Con más arranque y habilidad comercial, hubiera sido rico. Pero a los treinta y cinco años proseguía en su pieza, aderezada en taller bajo la ventana.

Kassim, de cuerpo mezquino, rostro exangüe sombreado por rala barba negra, tenía una mujer hermosa y fuertemente apasionada. La joven, de origen callejero, había aspirado con su hermosura a un más alto enlace. Esperó hasta los veinte años, provocando a los hombres y a sus vecinas con su cuerpo. Temerosa al fin, aceptó nerviosamente a Kassim.

No más sueños de lujo, sin embargo. Su marido, hábil--artista aún,--carecía completamente de carácter para hacer una fortuna. Por lo cual, mientras el joyero trabajaba doblado sobre sus pinzas, ella, de codos, sostenía sobre su marido una lenta y pesada mirada, para arrancarse luego bruscamente y seguir con la vista tras los vidrios al transeunte de posición que podía haber sido su marido.

Cuanto ganaba Kassim, no obstante, era para ella. Los domingos trabajaba también a fin de poderle ofrecer un suplemento. Cuando María deseaba una joya--¡y con cuánta pasión deseaba ella!--trabajaba de noche. Después había tos y puntadas al costado; pero María tenía sus chispas de brillante.

Poco a poco el trato diario con las gemas llegó a hacerle amar las tareas del artífice, y seguía con ardor las íntimas delicadezas del engarce. Pero cuando la joya estaba concluída--debía partir, no era para ella,--caía más hondamente en la decepción de su matrimonio. Se probaba la alhaja, deteniéndose ante el espejo. Al fin la dejaba por ahí, y se iba a su cuarto. Kassim se levantaba al oír sus sollozos, y la hallaba en la cama, sin querer escucharlo.

--Hago, sin embargo, cuanto puedo por ti,--decía él al fin, tristemente.

Los sollozos subían con esto, y el joyero se reinstalaba lentamente en su banco.

Estas cosas se repitieron, tanto que Kassim no se levantaba ya a

consolarla. ¡Consolarla! ¿de qué? Lo cual no obstaba para que Kassim prolongara más sus veladas a fin de un mayor suplemento.

Era un hombre indeciso, irresoluto y callado. Las miradas de su mujer se detenían ahora con más pesada fijeza sobre aquella muda tranquilidad.

--¡Y eres un hombre, tú!--murmuraba.

Kassim, sobre sus engarces, no cesaba de mover los dedos.

--No eres feliz conmigo, María--expresaba al rato.

--¡Feliz! ¡Y tienes el valor de decirlo! ¿Quién puede ser feliz contigo? ¡Ni la última de las mujeres!... ¡Pobre diablo!--concluía con risa nerviosa, yéndose.

Kassim trabajaba esa noche hasta las tres de la mañana, y su mujer tenía luego nuevas chispas que ella consideraba un instante con los labios apretados.

--Sí... ¡no es una diadema sorprendente!... ¿cuando la hiciste?

--Desde el martes--mirábala él con descolorida ternura--dormías de noche...

--¡Oh, podías haberte acostado!... ¡Inmensos, los brillantes!

Porque su pasión eran las voluminosas piedras que Kassim montaba. Seguía el trabajo con loca hambre de que concluyera de una vez, y apenas aderezada la alhaja, corría con ella al espejo. Luego, un ataque de sollozos.

--¡Todos, cualquier marido, el último, haría un sacrificio para halagar a su mujer! Y tú... y tú... ni un miserable vestido que ponerme, tengo!

Cuando se franquea cierto límite de respeto al varón, la mujer puede llegar a decir a su marido cosas increíbles.

La mujer de Kassim franqueó ese límite con una pasión igual por lo menos a la que sentía por los brillantes. Una tarde, al guardar sus joyas, Kassim notó la falta de un prendedor--cinco mil pesos en dos solitarios.--Buscó en sus cajones de nuevo.

--¿No has visto el prendedor, María? Lo dejé aquí.

--Sí, lo he visto.

--¿Dónde está?--se volvió extrañado.

--¡Aquí!

Su mujer, los ojos encendidos y la boca burlona, se erguía con el prendedor puesto.

--Te queda muy bien--dijo Kassim al rato.--Guardémoslo.

María se rió.

--Oh, no! es mío.

--Broma?...

--Sí, es broma! ¿es broma, sí! ¡Cómo te duele pensar que podría ser mío... Mañana te lo doy. Hoy voy al teatro con él.

Kassim se demudó.

--Haces mal... podrían verte. Perderían toda confianza en mí.

--¡Oh!--cerró ella con rabioso fastidio, golpeando violentamente la puerta.

Vuelta del teatro, colocó la joya sobre el velador. Kassim se levantó y la guardó en su taller bajo llave. Al volver, su mujer estaba sentada en la cama.

--¡Es decir, que temes que te la robe! ¡Qué soy una ladrona!

--No mires así... Has sido imprudente, nada más.

--¡Ah! ¡Y a ti te lo confían! ¡A ti, a ti! ¡Y cuando tu mujer te pide un poco de halago, y quiere... me llamas ladrona a mí! ¡Infame!

Se durmió al fin. Pero Kassim no durmió.

Entregaron luego a Kassim para montar, un solitario, el brillante más admirable que hubiera pasado por sus manos.

--Mira, María, qué piedra. No he visto otra igual.

Su mujer no dijo nada; pero Kassim la sintió respirar hondamente sobre el solitario.

--Una agua admirable...--prosiguió él--costará nueve o diez mil pesos.

--Un anillo!--murmuró María al fin.

--No, es de hombre... Un alfiler.

A compás del montaje del solitario, Kassim recibió sobre su espalda trabajadora cuanto ardía de rencor y cocotaje frustrado en su mujer. Diez veces por día interrumpía a su marido para ir con el brillante ante el espejo. Después se lo probaba con diferentes vestidos.

--Si quieres hacerlo después...--se atrevió Kassim.--Es un trabajo urgente.

Esperó respuesta en vano; su mujer abría el balcón.

--María, te pueden ver!

--Toma! ¡ahí está tu piedra!

El solitario, violentamente arrancado, rodó por el piso.

Kassim, lívido, lo recogió examinándolo, y alzó luego desde el suelo la mirada a su mujer.

--Y bueno, ¿por qué me miras así? ¿Se hizo algo tu piedra?

--No--repuso Kassim. Y reanudó en seguida su tarea, aunque las manos le temblaban hasta dar lástima.

Pero tuvo que levantarse al fin a ver a su mujer en el dormitorio, en plena crisis de nervios. El pelo se había soltado y los ojos le salían de las órbitas.

--¡Dame el brillante!--clamó.--¡Dámelo! ¡Nos escaparemos! ¡Para mí! ¡Dámelo!

--María...--tartamudeó Kassim, tratando de desasirse.

--¡Ah!--rugió su mujer enloquecida.--¡Tú eres el ladrón, miserable! ¡Me has robado mi vida, ladrón, ladrón! Y creías que no me iba a desquitar... cornudo! ¡Ajá! Mírame... no se te había ocurrido nunca, ¿eh? ¡Ah!--y se llevó las dos manos a la garganta ahogada. Pero cuando Kassim se iba, saltó de la cama y cayó, alcanzando a cogerlo de un botín.

--¡No importa! ¡El brillante, dámelo! ¡No quiero más que eso! ¡Es mío, Kassim miserable!

Kassim la ayudó a levantarse, lívido.

--Estás enferma, María. Después hablaremos... acuéstate.

--¡Mi brillante!

--Bueno, veremos si es posible... acuéstate.

--Dámelo!

La bola montó de nuevo a la garganta.

Kassim volvió a trabajar en su solitario. Como sus manos tenían una seguridad matemática, faltaban pocas horas ya.

María se levantó para comer, y Kassim tuvo la solicitud de siempre con ella. Al final de la cena su mujer lo miró de frente.

--Es mentira, Kassim--le dijo.

--¡Oh!--repuso Kassim sonriendo--no es nada.

--¡Te juro que es mentira!--insistió ella.

Kassim sonrió de nuevo, tocándole con torpe cariño la mano.

--¡Loca! Te digo que no me acuerdo de nada.

Y se levantó a proseguir su tarea. Su mujer, con la cara entre las manos, lo siguió con la vista.

--Y no me dice más que eso...--murmuró. Y con una honda náusea por aquello pegajoso, fofo e inerte que era su marido, se fué a su cuarto.

No durmió bien. Despertó, tarde ya, y vio luz en el taller; su marido continuaba trabajando. Una hora después, éste oyó un alarido.

--¡Dámelo!

--Sí, es para ti; falta poco, María--repuso presuroso, levantándose. Pero su mujer, tras ese grito de pesadilla, dormía de nuevo. A las dos de la mañana Kassim pudo dar por terminada su tarea; el brillante resplandecía, firme y varonil en su engarce. Con paso silencioso fué al dormitorio y encendió la veladora. María dormía de espaldas, en la blancura helada de su camisón y de la sábana.

Fué al taller y volvió de nuevo. Contempló un rato el seno casi descubierto, y con una descolorida sonrisa apartó un poco más el camisón desprendido.

Su mujer no lo sintió.

No había mucha luz. El rostro de Kassim adquirió de pronto una dura inmovilidad, y suspendiendo un instante la joya a flor del seno desnudo, hundió, firme y perpendicular como un clavo, el alfiler entero en el corazón de su mujer.

Hubo una brusca apertura de ojos, seguida de una lenta caída de párpados. Los dedos se arqueron, y nada más.

La joya, sacudida por la convulsión del ganglio herido, tembló un instante desequilibrada. Kassim esperó un momento; y cuando el solitario quedó por fin perfectamente inmóvil, pudo entonces retirarse, cerrando tras de sí la puerta sin hacer ruido.

From THE STRAND MAGAZINE

Vol. 27 MAY, 1904

THE RETURN OF SHERLOCK HOLMES.

By ARTHUR CONAN DOYLE.

VIII.--The Adventure of the Six Napoleons.

IT was no very unusual thing for Mr. Lestrade, of Scotland Yard, to look in upon us of an evening, and his visits were welcome to Sherlock Holmes, for they enabled him to keep in touch with all that was going on at the police head-quarters. In return for the news which Lestrade would bring, Holmes was always ready to listen with attention to the details of any case upon which the detective was engaged, and was able occasionally, without any active interference, to give some hint or suggestion drawn from his own vast knowledge and experience.

On this particular evening Lestrade had spoken of the weather and the newspapers. Then he had fallen silent, puffing thoughtfully at his cigar. Holmes looked keenly at him.

"Anything remarkable on hand?" he asked.

"Oh, no, Mr. Holmes, nothing very particular."

"Then tell me about it."

Lestrade laughed.

"Well, Mr. Holmes, there is no use denying that there IS something on my mind. And yet it is such an absurd business that I hesitated to bother you about it. On the other hand, although it is trivial, it is undoubtedly queer, and I know that you have a taste for all that is out of the common. But in my opinion it comes more in Dr. Watson's line than ours."

"Disease?" said I.

"Madness, anyhow. And a queer madness too! You wouldn't think there was anyone living at this time of day who had such a hatred of Napoleon the First that he would break any image of him that he could see."

Holmes sank back in his chair.

"That's no business of mine," said he.

"Exactly. That's what I said. But then, when the man commits burglary in order to break images which are not his own, that brings it away from the doctor and on to the policeman."

Holmes sat up again.

"Burglary! This is more interesting. Let me hear the details."

Lestrade took out his official note-book and refreshed his memory from its pages.

"The first case reported was four days ago," said he. "It was at the shop of Morse Hudson, who has a place for the sale of pictures and statues in the Kennington Road. The assistant had left the front shop for an instant when he heard a crash, and hurrying in he found a plaster bust of Napoleon, which stood with several other works of art upon the counter, lying shivered into fragments. He rushed out into the road, but, although several passers-by declared that they had noticed a man run out of the shop, he could neither see anyone nor could he find any means of identifying the rascal. It seemed to be one of those senseless acts of Hooliganism which occur from time to time, and it was reported to the constable on the beat as such. The plaster cast was not worth more than a few shillings, and the whole affair appeared to be too childish for any particular investigation."

"The second case, however, was more serious and also more singular. It occurred only last night."

"In Kennington Road, and within a few hundred yards of Morse Hudson's shop, there lives a well-known medical practitioner, named Dr. Barnicot, who has one of the largest practices upon the south side of the Thames. His residence and principal consulting-room is at Kennington Road, but he has a branch surgery and dispensary at Lower Brixton Road, two miles away. This Dr. Barnicot is an enthusiastic admirer of Napoleon, and his house is full of books, pictures, and relics of the French Emperor. Some little time ago he purchased from Morse Hudson two duplicate plaster casts of the famous head of Napoleon by the French sculptor, Devine. One of these he placed in his hall in the house at Kennington Road, and the other on the mantelpiece of the surgery at Lower Brixton. Well, when Dr. Barnicot came down this morning he was astonished to find that his house had been burgled during the night, but that nothing had been taken save the plaster head from the hall. It had been carried out and had been dashed savagely against the garden wall, under which its splintered fragments were discovered."

Holmes rubbed his hands.

"This is certainly very novel," said he.

"I thought it would please you. But I have not got to the end yet. Dr. Barnicot was due at his surgery at twelve o'clock, and you can imagine his amazement when, on arriving there, he found that the window had been opened in the night, and that the broken pieces of his second bust were strewn all over the room. It had been smashed to atoms where it stood. In neither case were there any signs which could give us a clue as to the criminal or lunatic who had done the mischief. Now, Mr. Holmes, you have got the facts."

"They are singular, not to say grotesque," said Holmes. "May I ask whether the two busts smashed in Dr. Barnicot's rooms were the exact duplicates of the one which was destroyed in Morse Hudson's shop?"

"They were taken from the same mould."

"Such a fact must tell against the theory that the man who breaks them is influenced by any general hatred of Napoleon. Considering how many hundreds of statues of the great Emperor must exist in London, it is too much to suppose such a coincidence as that a promiscuous iconoclast should chance to begin upon three specimens of the same bust."

"Well, I thought as you do," said Lestrade. "On the other hand, this Morse Hudson is the purveyor of busts in that part of London, and these three were the only ones which had been in his shop for years. So, although, as you say, there are many hundreds of statues in London, it is very probable that these three were the only ones in that district. Therefore, a local fanatic would begin with them. What do you think, Dr. Watson?"

"There are no limits to the possibilities of monomania," I answered. "There is the condition which the modern French psychologists have called the 'idee fixe,' which may be trifling in character, and accompanied by complete sanity in every other way. A man who had read deeply about Napoleon, or who had possibly received some hereditary family injury through the great war, might conceivably form such an 'idee fixe' and under its influence be capable of any fantastic outrage."

"That won't do, my dear Watson," said Holmes, shaking his head; "for no amount of 'idee fixe' would enable your interesting monomaniac to find out where these busts were situated."

"Well, how do YOU explain it?"

"I don't attempt to do so. I would only observe that there is a certain method in the gentleman's eccentric proceedings. For example, in Dr. Barnicot's hall, where a sound might arouse the family, the bust was taken outside before being broken, whereas in the surgery, where there

was less danger of an alarm, it was smashed where it stood. The affair seems absurdly trifling, and yet I dare call nothing trivial when I reflect that some of my most classic cases have had the least promising commencement. You will remember, Watson, how the dreadful business of the Abernethy family was first brought to my notice by the depth which the parsley had sunk into the butter upon a hot day. I can't afford, therefore, to smile at your three broken busts, Lestrade, and I shall be very much obliged to you if you will let me hear of any fresh developments of so singular a chain of events."

The development for which my friend had asked came in a quicker and an infinitely more tragic form than he could have imagined. I was still dressing in my bedroom next morning when there was a tap at the door and Holmes entered, a telegram in his hand. He read it aloud:--

"Come instantly, 131, Pitt Street, Kensington.--Lestrade."

"What is it, then?" I asked.

"Don't know--may be anything. But I suspect it is the sequel of the story of the statues. In that case our friend, the image-breaker, has begun operations in another quarter of London. There's coffee on the table, Watson, and I have a cab at the door."

In half an hour we had reached Pitt Street, a quiet little backwater just beside one of the briskest currents of London life. No. 131 was one of a row, all flat-chested, respectable, and most unromantic dwellings. As we drove up we found the railings in front of the house lined by a curious crowd. Holmes whistled.

"By George! it's attempted murder at the least. Nothing less will hold the London message-boy. There's a deed of violence indicated in that fellow's round shoulders and outstretched neck. What's this, Watson? The top steps swilled down and the other ones dry. Footsteps enough, anyhow! Well, well, there's Lestrade at the front window, and we shall soon know all about it."

The official received us with a very grave face and showed us into a sitting-room, where an exceedingly unkempt and agitated elderly man, clad in a flannel dressing-gown, was pacing up and down. He was introduced to us as the owner of the house--Mr. Horace Harker, of the Central Press Syndicate.

"It's the Napoleon bust business again," said Lestrade. "You seemed interested last night, Mr. Holmes, so I thought perhaps you would be glad to be present now that the affair has taken a very much graver turn."

"What has it turned to, then?"

"To murder. Mr. Harker, will you tell these gentlemen exactly what has occurred?"

The man in the dressing-gown turned upon us with a most melancholy face.

"It's an extraordinary thing," said he, "that all my life I have been collecting other people's news, and now that a real piece of news has come my own way I am so confused and bothered that I can't put two words together. If I had come in here as a journalist I should have interviewed myself and had two columns in every evening paper. As it is I am giving away valuable copy by telling my story over and over to a string of different people, and I can make no use of it myself. However, I've heard your name, Mr. Sherlock Holmes, and if you'll only explain this queer business I shall be paid for my trouble in telling you the story."

Holmes sat down and listened.

"It all seems to centre round that bust of Napoleon which I bought for this very room about four months ago. I picked it up cheap from Harding Brothers, two doors from the High Street Station. A great deal of my journalistic work is done at night, and I often write until the early morning. So it was to-day. I was sitting in my den, which is at the back of the top of the house, about three o'clock, when I was convinced that I heard some sounds downstairs. I listened, but they were not repeated, and I concluded that they came from outside. Then suddenly, about five minutes later, there came a most horrible yell--the most dreadful sound, Mr. Holmes, that ever I heard. It will ring in my ears as long as I live. I sat frozen with horror for a minute or two. Then I seized the poker and went downstairs. When I entered this room I found the window wide open, and I at once observed that the bust was gone from the mantelpiece. Why any burglar should take such a thing passes my understanding, for it was only a plaster cast and of no real value whatever.

"You can see for yourself that anyone going out through that open window could reach the front doorstep by taking a long stride. This was clearly what the burglar had done, so I went round and opened the door. Stepping out into the dark I nearly fell over a dead man who was lying there. I ran back for a light, and there was the poor fellow, a great gash in his throat and the whole place swimming in blood. He lay on his back, his knees drawn up, and his mouth horribly open. I shall see him in my dreams. I had just time to blow on my police-whistle, and then I must have fainted, for I knew nothing more until I found the policeman standing over me in the hall."

"Well, who was the murdered man?" asked Holmes.

"There's nothing to show who he was," said Lestrade. "You shall see the body at the mortuary, but we have made nothing of it up to now. He is a tall man, sunburned, very powerful, not more than thirty. He is poorly dressed, and yet does not appear to be a labourer. A horn-handled clasp knife was lying in a pool of blood beside him. Whether it was the weapon which did the deed, or whether it belonged to the dead man, I do not know. There was no name on his clothing, and nothing in his pockets save an apple, some string, a shilling map of London, and a photograph. Here it is."

It was evidently taken by a snap-shot from a small camera. It represented an alert, sharp-featured simian man with thick eyebrows, and a very peculiar projection of the lower part of the face like the muzzle of a baboon.

"And what became of the bust?" asked Holmes, after a careful study of this picture.

"We had news of it just before you came. It has been found in the front garden of an empty house in Campden House Road. It was broken into fragments. I am going round now to see it. Will you come?"

"Certainly. I must just take one look round." He examined the carpet and the window. "The fellow had either very long legs or was a most active man," said he. "With an area beneath, it was no mean feat to reach that window-ledge and open that window. Getting back was comparatively simple. Are you coming with us to see the remains of your bust, Mr. Harker?"

The disconsolate journalist had seated himself at a writing-table.

"I must try and make something of it," said he, "though I have no doubt that the first editions of the evening papers are out already with full details. It's like my luck! You remember when the stand fell at Doncaster? Well, I was the only journalist in the stand, and my journal the only one that had no account of it, for I was too shaken to write it. And now I'll be too late with a murder done on my own doorstep."

As we left the room we heard his pen travelling shrilly over the foolscap.

The spot where the fragments of the bust had been found was only a few hundred yards away. For the first time our eyes rested upon this presentment of the great Emperor, which seemed to raise such frantic and destructive hatred in the mind of the unknown. It lay scattered in splintered shards upon the grass. Holmes picked up several of them and examined them carefully. I was convinced from his intent face and his purposeful manner that at last he was upon a clue.

"Well?" asked Lestrade.

Holmes shrugged his shoulders.

"We have a long way to go yet," said he. "And yet--and yet--well, we have some suggestive facts to act upon. The possession of this trifling bust was worth more in the eyes of this strange criminal than a human life. That is one point. Then there is the singular fact that he did not break it in the house, or immediately outside the house, if to break it was his sole object."

"He was rattled and hustled by meeting this other fellow. He hardly knew what he was doing."

"Well, that's likely enough. But I wish to call your attention very particularly to the position of this house in the garden of which the bust was destroyed."

Lestrade looked about him.

"It was an empty house, and so he knew that he would not be disturbed in the garden."

"Yes, but there is another empty house farther up the street which he must have passed before he came to this one. Why did he not break it there, since it is evident that every yard that he carried it increased the risk of someone meeting him?"

"I give it up," said Lestrade.

Holmes pointed to the street lamp above our heads.

"He could see what he was doing here and he could not there. That was his reason."

"By Jove! that's true," said the detective. "Now that I come to think of it, Dr. Barnicot's bust was broken not far from his red lamp. Well, Mr. Holmes, what are we to do with that fact?"

"To remember it--to docket it. We may come on something later which will bear upon it. What steps do you propose to take now, Lestrade?"

"The most practical way of getting at it, in my opinion, is to identify the dead man. There should be no difficulty about that. When we have found who he is and who his associates are, we should have a good start in learning what he was doing in Pitt Street last night, and who it was who met him and killed him on the doorstep of Mr. Horace Harker. Don't you think so?"

"No doubt; and yet it is not quite the way in which I should approach the case."

"What would you do, then?"

"Oh, you must not let me influence you in any way! I suggest that you go on your line and I on mine. We can compare notes afterwards, and each will supplement the other."

"Very good," said Lestrade.

"If you are going back to Pitt Street you might see Mr. Horace Harker. Tell him from me that I have quite made up my mind, and that it is certain that a dangerous homicidal lunatic with Napoleonic delusions was in his house last night. It will be useful for his article."

Lestrade stared.

"You don't seriously believe that?"

Holmes smiled.

"Don't I? Well, perhaps I don't. But I am sure that it will interest Mr. Horace Harker and the subscribers of the Central Press Syndicate. Now, Watson, I think that we shall find that we have a long and rather complex day's work before us. I should be glad, Lestrade, if you could make it convenient to meet us at Baker Street at six o'clock this evening. Until then I should like to keep this photograph found in the dead man's pocket. It is possible that I may have to ask your company and assistance upon a small expedition which will have to be undertaken to-night, if my chain of reasoning should prove to be correct. Until then, good-bye and good luck!"

Sherlock Holmes and I walked together to the High Street, where he stopped at the shop of Harding Brothers, whence the bust had been purchased. A young assistant informed us that Mr. Harding would be absent until after noon, and that he was himself a newcomer who could give us no information. Holmes's face showed his disappointment and annoyance.

"Well, well, we can't expect to have it all our own way, Watson," he said, at last. "We must come back in the afternoon if Mr. Harding will not be here until then. I am, as you have no doubt surmised, endeavouring to trace these busts to their source, in order to find if there is not something peculiar which may account for their remarkable fate. Let us make for Mr. Morse Hudson, of the Kennington Road, and see if he can throw any light upon the problem."

A drive of an hour brought us to the picture-dealer's establishment. He was a small, stout man with a red face and a peppery manner.

"Yes, sir. On my very counter, sir," said he. "What we pay rates and taxes for I don't know, when any ruffian can come in and break one's goods. Yes, sir, it was I who sold Dr. Barnicot his two statues. Disgraceful, sir! A Nihilist plot, that's what I make it. No one but an Anarchist would go about breaking statues. Red republicans, that's what I call 'em. Who did I get the statues from? I don't see what that has to do with it. Well, if you really want to know, I got them from Gelder and Co., in Church Street, Stepney. They are a well-known house in the trade, and have been this twenty years. How many had I? Three--two and one are three--two of Dr. Barnicot's and one smashed in broad daylight on my own counter. Do I know that photograph? No, I don't. Yes, I do, though. Why, it's Beppo. He was a kind of Italian piece-work man, who made himself useful in the shop. He could carve a bit and gild and frame, and do odd jobs. The fellow left me last week, and I've heard nothing of him since. No, I don't know where he came from nor where he went to. I have nothing against him while he was here. He was gone two days before the bust was smashed."

"Well, that's all we could reasonably expect to get from Morse Hudson," said Holmes, as we emerged from the shop. "We have this Beppo as a common factor, both in Kennington and in Kensington, so that is worth a ten-mile drive. Now, Watson, let us make for Gelder and Co., of Stepney, the source and origin of busts. I shall be surprised if we don't get some help down there."

In rapid succession we passed through the fringe of fashionable London, hotel London, theatrical London, literary London, commercial London, and, finally, maritime London, till we came to a riverside city of a hundred thousand souls, where the tenement houses swelter and reek with the outcasts of Europe. Here, in a broad thoroughfare, once the abode of wealthy City merchants, we found the sculpture works for which we searched. Outside was a considerable yard full of monumental masonry. Inside was a large room in which fifty workers were carving or moulding. The manager, a big blond German, received us civilly, and gave a clear answer to all Holmes's questions. A reference to his books showed that hundreds of casts had been taken from a marble copy of Devine's head of Napoleon, but that the three which had been sent to Morse Hudson a year or so before had been half of a batch of six, the other three being sent to Harding Brothers, of Kensington. There was no reason why those six should be different to any of the other casts. He could suggest no possible cause why anyone should wish to destroy them--in fact, he laughed at the idea. Their wholesale price was six shillings, but the retailer would get twelve or more. The cast was taken in two moulds from each side of the face, and then these two profiles of plaster of Paris were joined together to make the complete bust. The work was usually done by Italians in the room we were in. When finished the busts were

put on a table in the passage to dry, and afterwards stored. That was all he could tell us.

But the production of the photograph had a remarkable effect upon the manager. His face flushed with anger, and his brows knotted over his blue Teutonic eyes.

"Ah, the rascal!" he cried. "Yes, indeed, I know him very well. This has always been a respectable establishment, and the only time that we have ever had the police in it was over this very fellow. It was more than a year ago now. He knifed another Italian in the street, and then he came to the works with the police on his heels, and he was taken here. Beppo was his name--his second name I never knew. Serve me right for engaging a man with such a face. But he was a good workman, one of the best."

"What did he get?"

"The man lived and he got off with a year. I have no doubt he is out now; but he has not dared to show his nose here. We have a cousin of his here, and I dare say he could tell you where he is."

"No, no," cried Holmes, "not a word to the cousin--not a word, I beg you. The matter is very important, and the farther I go with it the more important it seems to grow. When you referred in your ledger to the sale of those casts I observed that the date was June 3rd of last year. Could you give me the date when Beppo was arrested?"

"I could tell you roughly by the pay-list," the manager answered. "Yes," he continued, after some turning over of pages, "he was paid last on May 20th."

"Thank you," said Holmes. "I don't think that I need intrude upon your time and patience any more." With a last word of caution that he should say nothing as to our researches we turned our faces westward once more.

The afternoon was far advanced before we were able to snatch a hasty luncheon at a restaurant. A news-bill at the entrance announced "Kensington Outrage. Murder by a Madman," and the contents of the paper showed that Mr. Horace Harker had got his account into print after all. Two columns were occupied with a highly sensational and flowery rendering of the whole incident. Holmes propped it against the cruet-stand and read it while he ate. Once or twice he chuckled.

"This is all right, Watson," said he. "Listen to this: 'It is satisfactory to know that there can be no difference of opinion upon this case, since Mr. Lestrade, one of the most experienced members of the official force, and Mr. Sherlock Holmes, the well-known consulting expert, have each come to the conclusion that the grotesque series of incidents, which have ended in so tragic a fashion, arise from lunacy

rather than from deliberate crime. No explanation save mental aberration can cover the facts.' The Press, Watson, is a most valuable institution if you only know how to use it. And now, if you have quite finished, we will hark back to Kensington and see what the manager of Harding Brothers has to say to the matter."

The founder of that great emporium proved to be a brisk, crisp little person, very dapper and quick, with a clear head and a ready tongue.

"Yes, sir, I have already read the account in the evening papers. Mr. Horace Harker is a customer of ours. We supplied him with the bust some months ago. We ordered three busts of that sort from Gelder and Co., of Stepney. They are all sold now. To whom? Oh, I dare say by consulting our sales book we could very easily tell you. Yes, we have the entries here. One to Mr. Harker, you see, and one to Mr. Josiah Brown, of Laburnum Lodge, Laburnum Vale, Chiswick, and one to Mr. Sandeford, of Lower Grove Road, Reading. No, I have never seen this face which you show me in the photograph. You would hardly forget it, would you, sir, for I've seldom seen an uglier. Have we any Italians on the staff? Yes, sir, we have several among our workpeople and cleaners. I dare say they might get a peep at that sales book if they wanted to. There is no particular reason for keeping a watch upon that book. Well, well, it's a very strange business, and I hope that you'll let me know if anything comes of your inquiries."

Holmes had taken several notes during Mr. Harding's evidence, and I could see that he was thoroughly satisfied by the turn which affairs were taking. He made no remark, however, save that, unless we hurried, we should be late for our appointment with Lestrade. Sure enough, when we reached Baker Street the detective was already there, and we found him pacing up and down in a fever of impatience. His look of importance showed that his day's work had not been in vain.

"Well?" he asked. "What luck, Mr. Holmes?"

"We have had a very busy day, and not entirely a wasted one," my friend explained. "We have seen both the retailers and also the wholesale manufacturers. I can trace each of the busts now from the beginning."

"The busts!" cried Lestrade. "Well, well, you have your own methods, Mr. Sherlock Holmes, and it is not for me to say a word against them, but I think I have done a better day's work than you. I have identified the dead man."

"You don't say so?"

"And found a cause for the crime."

"Splendid!"

"We have an inspector who makes a specialty of Saffron Hill and the Italian quarter. Well, this dead man had some Catholic emblem round his neck, and that, along with his colour, made me think he was from the South. Inspector Hill knew him the moment he caught sight of him. His name is Pietro Venucci, from Naples, and he is one of the greatest cut-throats in London. He is connected with the Mafia, which, as you know, is a secret political society, enforcing its decrees by murder. Now you see how the affair begins to clear up. The other fellow is probably an Italian also, and a member of the Mafia. He has broken the rules in some fashion. Pietro is set upon his track. Probably the photograph we found in his pocket is the man himself, so that he may not knife the wrong person. He dogs the fellow, he sees him enter a house, he waits outside for him, and in the scuffle he receives his own death-wound. How is that, Mr. Sherlock Holmes?"

Holmes clapped his hands approvingly.

"Excellent, Lestrade, excellent!" he cried. "But I didn't quite follow your explanation of the destruction of the busts."

"The busts! You never can get those busts out of your head. After all, that is nothing; petty larceny, six months at the most. It is the murder that we are really investigating, and I tell you that I am gathering all the threads into my hands."

"And the next stage?"

"Is a very simple one. I shall go down with Hill to the Italian quarter, find the man whose photograph we have got, and arrest him on the charge of murder. Will you come with us?"

"I think not. I fancy we can attain our end in a simpler way. I can't say for certain, because it all depends--well, it all depends upon a factor which is completely outside our control. But I have great hopes--in fact, the betting is exactly two to one--that if you will come with us to-night I shall be able to help you to lay him by the heels."

"In the Italian quarter?"

"No; I fancy Chiswick is an address which is more likely to find him. If you will come with me to Chiswick to-night, Lestrade, I'll promise to go to the Italian quarter with you to-morrow, and no harm will be done by the delay. And now I think that a few hours' sleep would do us all good, for I do not propose to leave before eleven o'clock, and it is unlikely that we shall be back before morning. You'll dine with us, Lestrade, and then you are welcome to the sofa until it is time for us to start. In the meantime, Watson, I should be glad if you would ring for an express messenger, for I have a letter to send, and it is important that it

should go at once."

Holmes spent the evening in rummaging among the files of the old daily papers with which one of our lumber-rooms was packed. When at last he descended it was with triumph in his eyes, but he said nothing to either of us as to the result of his researches. For my own part, I had followed step by step the methods by which he had traced the various windings of this complex case, and, though I could not yet perceive the goal which we would reach, I understood clearly that Holmes expected this grotesque criminal to make an attempt upon the two remaining busts, one of which, I remembered, was at Chiswick. No doubt the object of our journey was to catch him in the very act, and I could not but admire the cunning with which my friend had inserted a wrong clue in the evening paper, so as to give the fellow the idea that he could continue his scheme with impunity. I was not surprised when Holmes suggested that I should take my revolver with me. He had himself picked up the loaded hunting-crop which was his favourite weapon.

A four-wheeler was at the door at eleven, and in it we drove to a spot at the other side of Hammersmith Bridge. Here the cabman was directed to wait. A short walk brought us to a secluded road fringed with pleasant houses, each standing in its own grounds. In the light of a street lamp we read "Laburnum Villa" upon the gate-post of one of them. The occupants had evidently retired to rest, for all was dark save for a fanlight over the hall door, which shed a single blurred circle on to the garden path. The wooden fence which separated the grounds from the road threw a dense black shadow upon the inner side, and here it was that we crouched.

"I fear that you'll have a long wait," Holmes whispered. "We may thank our stars that it is not raining. I don't think we can even venture to smoke to pass the time. However, it's a two to one chance that we get something to pay us for our trouble."

It proved, however, that our vigil was not to be so long as Holmes had led us to fear, and it ended in a very sudden and singular fashion. In an instant, without the least sound to warn us of his coming, the garden gate swung open, and a lithe, dark figure, as swift and active as an ape, rushed up the garden path. We saw it whisk past the light thrown from over the door and disappear against the black shadow of the house. There was a long pause, during which we held our breath, and then a very gentle creaking sound came to our ears. The window was being opened. The noise ceased, and again there was a long silence. The fellow was making his way into the house. We saw the sudden flash of a dark lantern inside the room. What he sought was evidently not there, for again we saw the flash through another blind, and then through another.

"Let us get to the open window. We will nab him as he climbs out," Lestrade whispered.

But before we could move the man had emerged again. As he came out into the glimmering patch of light we saw that he carried something white under his arm. He looked stealthily all round him. The silence of the deserted street reassured him. Turning his back upon us he laid down his burden, and the next instant there was the sound of a sharp tap, followed by a clatter and rattle. The man was so intent upon what he was doing that he never heard our steps as we stole across the grass plot. With the bound of a tiger Holmes was on his back, and an instant later Lestrade and I had him by either wrist and the handcuffs had been fastened. As we turned him over I saw a hideous, sallow face, with writhing, furious features, glaring up at us, and I knew that it was indeed the man of the photograph whom we had secured.

But it was not our prisoner to whom Holmes was giving his attention. Squatted on the doorstep, he was engaged in most carefully examining that which the man had brought from the house. It was a bust of Napoleon like the one which we had seen that morning, and it had been broken into similar fragments. Carefully Holmes held each separate shard to the light, but in no way did it differ from any other shattered piece of plaster. He had just completed his examination when the hall lights flew up, the door opened, and the owner of the house, a jovial, rotund figure in shirt and trousers, presented himself.

"Mr. Josiah Brown, I suppose?" said Holmes.

"Yes, sir; and you, no doubt, are Mr. Sherlock Holmes? I had the note which you sent by the express messenger, and I did exactly what you told me. We locked every door on the inside and awaited developments. Well, I'm very glad to see that you have got the rascal. I hope, gentlemen, that you will come in and have some refreshment."

However, Lestrade was anxious to get his man into safe quarters, so within a few minutes our cab had been summoned and we were all four upon our way to London. Not a word would our captive say; but he glared at us from the shadow of his matted hair, and once, when my hand seemed within his reach, he snapped at it like a hungry wolf. We stayed long enough at the police-station to learn that a search of his clothing revealed nothing save a few shillings and a long sheath knife, the handle of which bore copious traces of recent blood.

"That's all right," said Lestrade, as we parted. "Hill knows all these gentry, and he will give a name to him. You'll find that my theory of the Mafia will work out all right. But I'm sure I am exceedingly obliged to you, Mr. Holmes, for the workmanlike way in which you laid hands upon him. I don't quite understand it all yet."

"I fear it is rather too late an hour for explanations," said Holmes.
"Besides, there are one or two details which are not finished off, and

it is one of those cases which are worth working out to the very end. If you will come round once more to my rooms at six o'clock to-morrow I think I shall be able to show you that even now you have not grasped the entire meaning of this business, which presents some features which make it absolutely original in the history of crime. If ever I permit you to chronicle any more of my little problems, Watson, I foresee that you will enliven your pages by an account of the singular adventure of the Napoleonic busts."

When we met again next evening Lestrade was furnished with much information concerning our prisoner. His name, it appeared, was Beppo, second name unknown. He was a well-known ne'er-do-well among the Italian colony. He had once been a skilful sculptor and had earned an honest living, but he had taken to evil courses and had twice already been in gaol--once for a petty theft and once, as we had already heard, for stabbing a fellow-countryman. He could talk English perfectly well. His reasons for destroying the busts were still unknown, and he refused to answer any questions upon the subject; but the police had discovered that these same busts might very well have been made by his own hands, since he was engaged in this class of work at the establishment of Gelder and Co. To all this information, much of which we already knew, Holmes listened with polite attention; but I, who knew him so well, could clearly see that his thoughts were elsewhere, and I detected a mixture of mingled uneasiness and expectation beneath that mask which he was wont to assume. At last he started in his chair and his eyes brightened. There had been a ring at the bell. A minute later we heard steps upon the stairs, and an elderly, red-faced man with grizzled side-whiskers was ushered in. In his right hand he carried an old-fashioned carpet-bag, which he placed upon the table.

"Is Mr. Sherlock Holmes here?"

My friend bowed and smiled. "Mr. Sandeford, of Reading, I suppose?" said he.

"Yes, sir, I fear that I am a little late; but the trains were awkward. You wrote to me about a bust that is in my possession."

"Exactly."

"I have your letter here. You said, 'I desire to possess a copy of Devine's Napoleon, and am prepared to pay you ten pounds for the one which is in your possession.' Is that right?"

"Certainly."

"I was very much surprised at your letter, for I could not imagine how you knew that I owned such a thing."

"Of course you must have been surprised, but the explanation is very simple. Mr. Harding, of Harding Brothers, said that they had sold you their last copy, and he gave me your address."

"Oh, that was it, was it? Did he tell you what I paid for it?"

"No, he did not."

"Well, I am an honest man, though not a very rich one. I only gave fifteen shillings for the bust, and I think you ought to know that before I take ten pounds from you."

"I am sure the scruple does you honour, Mr. Sandeford. But I have named that price, so I intend to stick to it."

"Well, it is very handsome of you, Mr. Holmes. I brought the bust up with me, as you asked me to do. Here it is!" He opened his bag, and at last we saw placed upon our table a complete specimen of that bust which we had already seen more than once in fragments.

Holmes took a paper from his pocket and laid a ten-pound note upon the table.

"You will kindly sign that paper, Mr. Sandeford, in the presence of these witnesses. It is simply to say that you transfer every possible right that you ever had in the bust to me. I am a methodical man, you see, and you never know what turn events might take afterwards. Thank you, Mr. Sandeford; here is your money, and I wish you a very good evening."

When our visitor had disappeared Sherlock Holmes's movements were such as to rivet our attention. He began by taking a clean white cloth from a drawer and laying it over the table. Then he placed his newly-acquired bust in the centre of the cloth. Finally, he picked up his hunting-crop and struck Napoleon a sharp blow on the top of the head. The figure broke into fragments, and Holmes bent eagerly over the shattered remains. Next instant, with a loud shout of triumph, he held up one splinter, in which a round, dark object was fixed like a plum in a pudding.

"Gentlemen," he cried, "let me introduce you to the famous black pearl of the Borgias."

Lestrade and I sat silent for a moment, and then, with a spontaneous impulse, we both broke out clapping as at the well-wrought crisis of a play. A flush of colour sprang to Holmes's pale cheeks, and he bowed to us like the master dramatist who receives the homage of his audience. It was at such moments that for an instant he ceased to be a reasoning

machine, and betrayed his human love for admiration and applause. The same singularly proud and reserved nature which turned away with disdain from popular notoriety was capable of being moved to its depths by spontaneous wonder and praise from a friend.

"Yes, gentlemen," said he, "it is the most famous pearl now existing in the world, and it has been my good fortune, by a connected chain of inductive reasoning, to trace it from the Prince of Colonna's bedroom at the Dacre Hotel, where it was lost, to the interior of this, the last of the six busts of Napoleon which were manufactured by Gelder and Co., of Stepney. You will remember, Lestrade, the sensation caused by the disappearance of this valuable jewel, and the vain efforts of the London police to recover it. I was myself consulted upon the case; but I was unable to throw any light upon it. Suspicion fell upon the maid of the Princess, who was an Italian, and it was proved that she had a brother in London, but we failed to trace any connection between them. The maid's name was Lucretia Venucci, and there is no doubt in my mind that this Pietro who was murdered two nights ago was the brother. I have been looking up the dates in the old files of the paper, and I find that the disappearance of the pearl was exactly two days before the arrest of Beppo for some crime of violence, an event which took place in the factory of Gelder and Co., at the very moment when these busts were being made. Now you clearly see the sequence of events, though you see them, of course, in the inverse order to the way in which they presented themselves to me. Beppo had the pearl in his possession. He may have stolen it from Pietro, he may have been Pietro's confederate, he may have been the go-between of Pietro and his sister. It is of no consequence to us which is the correct solution.

"The main fact is that he HAD the pearl, and at that moment, when it was on his person, he was pursued by the police. He made for the factory in which he worked, and he knew that he had only a few minutes in which to conceal this enormously valuable prize, which would otherwise be found on him when he was searched. Six plaster casts of Napoleon were drying in the passage. One of them was still soft. In an instant Beppo, a skilful workman, made a small hole in the wet plaster, dropped in the pearl, and with a few touches covered over the aperture once more. It was an admirable hiding-place. No one could possibly find it. But Beppo was condemned to a year's imprisonment, and in the meanwhile his six busts were scattered over London. He could not tell which contained his treasure. Only by breaking them could he see. Even shaking would tell him nothing, for as the plaster was wet it was probable that the pearl would adhere to it--as, in fact, it has done. Beppo did not despair, and he conducted his search with considerable ingenuity and perseverance. Through a cousin who works with Gelder he found out the retail firms who had bought the busts. He managed to find employment with Morse Hudson, and in that way tracked down three of them. The pearl was not there. Then, with the help of some Italian EMPLOYEE, he succeeded in finding out where the other three busts had gone. The first was at Harker's. There

he was dogged by his confederate, who held Beppo responsible for the loss of the pearl, and he stabbed him in the scuffle which followed."

"If he was his confederate why should he carry his photograph?" I asked.

"As a means of tracing him if he wished to inquire about him from any third person. That was the obvious reason. Well, after the murder I calculated that Beppo would probably hurry rather than delay his movements. He would fear that the police would read his secret, and so he hastened on before they should get ahead of him. Of course, I could not say that he had not found the pearl in Harker's bust. I had not even concluded for certain that it was the pearl; but it was evident to me that he was looking for something, since he carried the bust past the other houses in order to break it in the garden which had a lamp overlooking it. Since Harker's bust was one in three the chances were exactly as I told you, two to one against the pearl being inside it. There remained two busts, and it was obvious that he would go for the London one first. I warned the inmates of the house, so as to avoid a second tragedy, and we went down with the happiest results. By that time, of course, I knew for certain that it was the Borgia pearl that we were after. The name of the murdered man linked the one event with the other. There only remained a single bust--the Reading one--and the pearl must be there. I bought it in your presence from the owner--and there it lies."

We sat in silence for a moment.

"Well," said Lestrade, "I've seen you handle a good many cases, Mr. Holmes, but I don't know that I ever knew a more workmanlike one than that. We're not jealous of you at Scotland Yard. No, sir, we are very proud of you, and if you come down to-morrow there's not a man, from the oldest inspector to the youngest constable, who wouldn't be glad to shake you by the hand."

"Thank you!" said Holmes. "Thank you!" and as he turned away it seemed to me that he was more nearly moved by the softer human emotions than I had ever seen him. A moment later he was the cold and practical thinker once more. "Put the pearl in the safe, Watson," said he, "and get out the papers of the Conk-Singleton forgery case. Good-bye, Lestrade. If any little problem comes your way I shall be happy, if I can, to give you a hint or two as to its solution."